PC Update

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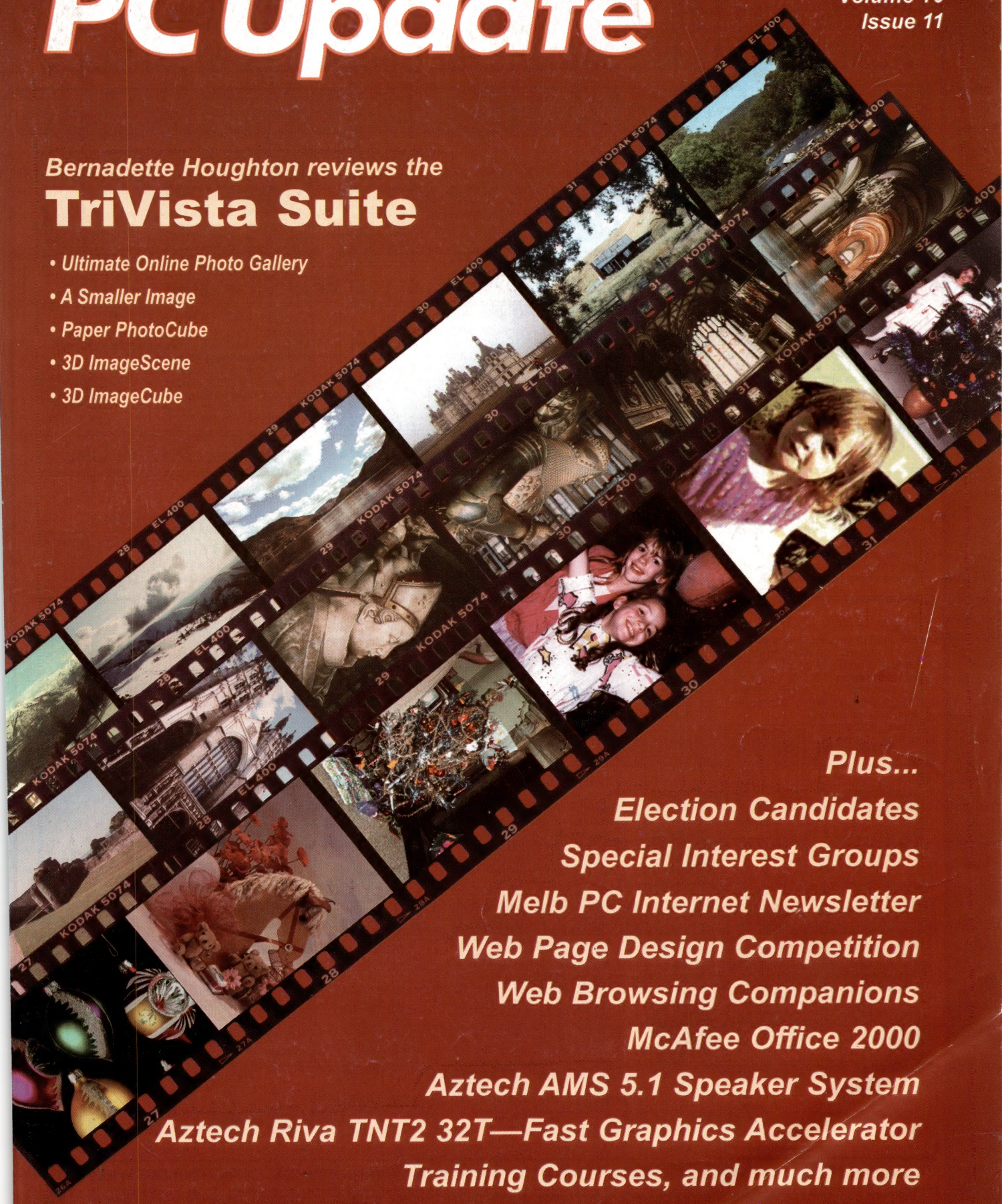

Bernadette Houghton reviews the

TriVista Suite

- *Ultimate Online Photo Gallery*
- *A Smaller Image*
- *Paper PhotoCube*
- *3D ImageScene*
- *3D ImageCube*

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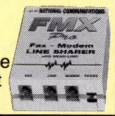

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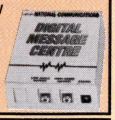

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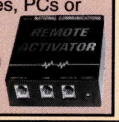

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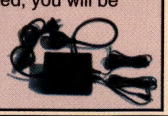

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PC Update

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MELB PC USER GROUP PC Update

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Submissions

E-mail your articles, reports, reviews, and free ads to pcupdate@melbpc.org.au as file attachments. They can be Word files, plain, unformatted (ASCII) text files or plain unformatted (ASCII) text files bundled in a ZIP file with accompanying graphics. Do not pack them inside self-extracting EXE files. Submissions can also be sent by post on a virus-free diskette, which will not be returned, to the Group's PO Box.

Editing

All articles are edited for style, spelling, grammar and length. Articles that may not be edited or that do not meet our standards, will be rejected.

Graphics

Supply graphics or screen shots, wherever possible, as colour, or black and white images, saved in one of the formats: TIF, BMP, PCX, WMF or EPS.

Rejections

Contact the editor if your submission is not published within four issues. Self-extracting files or virus infections are rejected without notification. Other rejections are advised by phone or in writing.

PC (President's Comments)

Morris Tobias, President

As another year comes to an end, perhaps it's an opportune time to reflect on the hard work put into the running of Melb PC by our seemingly tireless volunteers.

We'd be hard pressed to find any more dedicated than Richard Solly, George Skarbek, Ash Nallawalla, John Morris and Stan Johnstone, Sean Clarke and Jason Lee from the Internet team. These people put in an extraordinary number of hours to ensure that we have, what I believe is the best value Internet service available.

Our BBS has, sadly, fallen out of favour with many, but the efforts of Phil Lew, Michael Marquart and the rest of the team continue unswervingly.

The *PC Update* team continued to produce a quality magazine largely under the editorship of Carol Daniels and more recently Ash Nallawalla. Gary Taig has taken the reins doing production for the last three issues of 1999 and his efforts have been outstanding.

Swap meets are part of our public face. Coordinated by Thom Lyons, volunteers too numerous to mention man the stalls week after week. Ian Rankin took the reins of Training Coordinator during the year, and is doing an excellent job. Although our trainers are paid for taking classes, they all put in many hours on preparation, notes and attending meetings.

The Webster family continue to provide members with a world-class Shareware selection. It is easy to forget that not everyone has access to the Internet, and those members more than anyone appreciate the effort put in by David, Glenn, Ian and Yvonne.

Each of our SIG leaders deserves a special mention — space considerations prevent me from doing so. If you think the responsibilities of being in charge of a SIG is an easy task, consider how you would manage to keep up to 40 or more people entertained and educated each month!

The "office" volunteers are the people who do the unenviable task of folding, enveloping and mailing all those invoices and reminders you get, as well as helping out with other admin and telephone duties. Most office volunteers have been coming in on their set day for over six years. A special thanks to them.

As well as the more high profile volunteers, we should also show our gratitude to those behind the scenes as it were. Our librarian, Gloria Simos has been an asset, weeding out the good from the bad in our mostly member-donated collection of books

Ian Felsenthal coordinates our home assistance scheme with, again, too many helpers to name individually.

Spare a thought also for the members on our Dial Help service. Many have been there for years, quietly and almost anonymously talking fellow members through problems; everything from how to insert a floppy disk to complex programming matters.

Finally, there are those who have given themselves the unenviable task of being part of the Committee of Management. This is a rewarding but often thankless task; something that really has to be experienced to be appreciated. All members will surely agree that we are very lucky to have a band of such dedicated volunteers — the group really couldn't exist without them.

Morris

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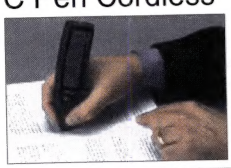

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Editorial

Ash Nallawalla

Are computer user groups dying? Looking at Melb PC, you would not think so, but this is the perception all over the world. Melb PC is an exception only because we are our own ISP and over 60 percent of our members subscribe to it. Why are user groups in decline?

Without doubt, the Web is the main reason, although nobody has proven this in a scientific manner. When I first signed on as Editor of *PC Update* back in 1988, I recall many members who were professional software developers and who would come to our monthly meetings and ask esoteric questions during Random Access. When Bill Gates came to speak to us in 1989 at the Rialto theatrette, he caught a tram back to wherever he was going. Computer companies did not communicate well with users, who were left to their own devices and some commercial magazines for knowledge. We sold shareware for $10 per 360 KB diskette and had a two-line BBS. User groups were exciting places then because most users were enthusiasts (nerds?) who were having the time of their lives, communicating in person.

Bill Gates is now so busy that he schedules brief interviews in his limousine between two engagements. I needn't waste space outlining other advances in the late 1990s, but it seems that the professional PC users have outgrown generic user groups such as ours. They have moved on to developer user groups, which are sometimes a marketing exercise on behalf of the software vendor. Interestingly enough, our recent member surveys say that we have very few novice users amongst us. Most of our members come from the engineering, teaching, and health sectors. Most of our new members have been referred by an existing member.

Why are other groups in decline and what is the relevance to us? At my previous job I had the opportunity to visit many capital cities and New Zealand. Sometimes I had the freedom to time my trips to coincide with the committee meetings of other groups. The user groups all had energetic leaders, comprehensive newsletters and busy BBSs. Some of those groups sneered at our "commercial" initiatives, either out of jealousy or because their leaders or advertisers had a conflict of interest.

Some volunteers have performed their tasks as a hobby, which can be put aside for much of the year. Surveys are taken; the findings are largely ignored; then it is time to conduct a new survey. The value of publicity and marketing is heartily endorsed by all but nobody has the time to lend a hand.

Equally, vendors have been merging or disappearing. Microsoft Office has around 92 percent market share, so few people bother to look for alternatives to office software. While there are other software categories, one needs to examine the member demographics to see that our ageing population is unlikely to be the target audience of a vendor. Melb PC's survey respondents had a mean age of 51, which is not too old; some overseas groups are made up entirely of retirees and get very little attention from the vendors.

While we are in very good shape, I hope we continue to do so. Please participate in this user group, either electronically in our newsgroups or in person at our SIG meetings. I wish you all the best for the festive season and remind you that the next issue of *PC Update* is February 2000. ❑

Why does a newspaper look like a newspaper?

How many products can be planned, designed, manufactured and distributed within a month — or even a week, or a day? Newspapers have evolved into a lowcost method of distributing information, whether that is editorial, or advertisements, or a mixture. Many agencies, designers and bureaus, as well as those who want them, shy away from newspaper production because they are so different. And, if they do go ahead, they often turn out to be expensive and, well, they may be a newspaper shape, but they don't look like a newspaper. We can help. We don't print them, but we can help you create them. See our web page:

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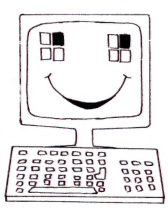

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TriVista Suite

Bernadette Houghton

Create online photo galleries in a snap, display your photos in 3D virtual worlds, and present your friends and relations with customised photo cubes. The TriVista Suite is a set of five fun programs that can really spark your creativity and liven up your Web pages.

Written in Java, each program in the Suite is a separate entity in its own right. The main program, A Smaller Image, is a fuss-free image editor, while the other programs produce a variety of graphic output. Except for A Smaller Image, all the programs share a similar wizard-type interface and include an integrated, modified version of A Smaller Image.

A Smaller Image

Using A Smaller Image, you can touch up and reduce the size of images prior to e-mailing or publishing to the Web *(Figure 1)*. There aren't a lot of options — just smooth/sharpen, lighten/darken, rotate and resize. However, all the controls are slider-operated and you can preview the results of any adjustments immediately. A Smaller Image can open files in BMP, JPEG, PCX, GIF, TIF and WMF format, and save in BMP, JPEG and PNG format.

There is no online help, but it really doesn't matter. A Smaller Image is such a simple program that if you can't work it out on your own, the Tips of the Day (all 11 of them!) should be more than enough to teach you to become a proficient user.

Paper PhotoCube

With Paper PhotoCube, you can create attractive, personalised photo cubes, for printing, e-mailing or publishing to the Web *(Figure 2)*. There are three resolutions to choose from, including a 400x400 designed specifically for images from Kodak Picture Disks. Paper PhotoCube includes online help and a Quick Start tutorial. However, as with A Smaller Image, its such a simple program that you should be able to nut it out by yourself. One drawback — it reads only JPEG images.

Ultimate Online Photo Gallery

With Ultimate Online Photo Gallery, you can create captioned photo galleries from your JPEG or GIF images *(Figure 3-4)*. The wizard-like interface makes the process quick and easy, and you can choose from three sizes of thumbnail and three kinds of gallery — tables, montages or photo strips. The number of images permitted per gallery permitted depends on the thumbnail size chosen — ranging from 16 images with the largest thumbnails, up to 32 images with the smallest. These limits ensure that galleries download quickly, but you can have an unlimited number of galleries. Once uploaded to the Web, the user clicks on a thumbnail to display the full image in a separate browser window, sized-to-fit popup window or frame.

An annoying feature of Photo Gallery is that you must place all the images you want to include in a gallery into the same directory on your hard disk.

3D ImageScene

With 3D ImageScene, you can display thumbnails of your images in a range of 3D virtual scenes *(Figure 5)*. For instance, as billboards along a highway, in an art gallery, a photo album, a rotating carousel, a series of postcard racks or a simple landscape. The user controls the scene with the mouse or keyboard, and clicks on a thumbnail to display the full image.

3D ImageCube

3D ImageCube enables you to create animated Web guides, such as tumbling cubes or rotating carousels, where each cube face and carousel wall links to a URL *(Figure 6)*. Both cubes and carousels can contain up to six images, and the user controls the animation via a series of simple buttons. As with the other products in the Suite, ImageCube is very straightforward to use — just drag and drop your desired images onto a template then answer a few simple questions.

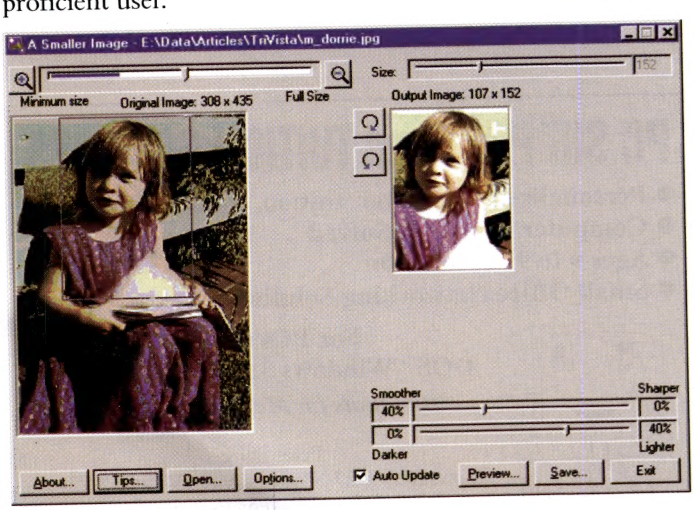


Figure 1. A Smaller Image

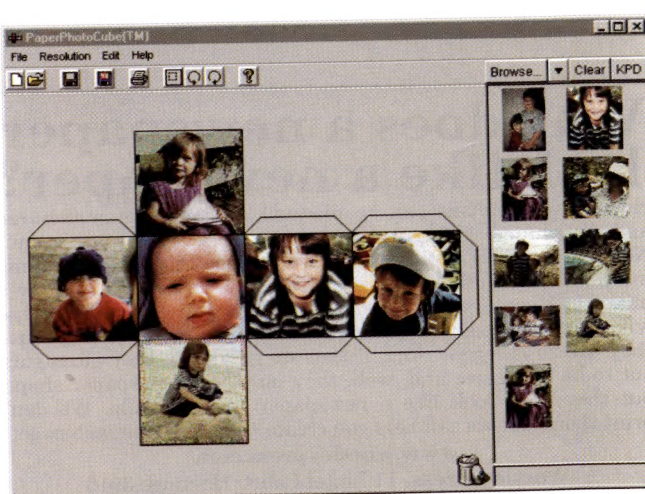


Figure 2. Paper PhotoCul

Figure 3. Ultimate Online Photo Gallery's wizard

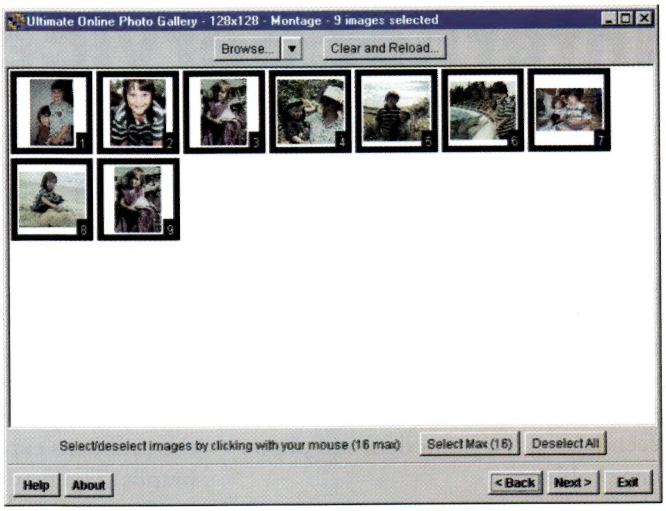


Figure 4. Selecting images to add to a Photo Gallery

How They Work

Except for A Smaller Image, each program is largely drag-and-drop. Basically, you drag images from a browse window and drop them onto a template. Double-clicking an image opens it in the modified version of A Smaller Image, where you can quickly adjust the thumbnail view as necessary. One or two more screens, where you choose your output options and file names, and that's that. Each program automatically creates any necessary HTML, VRML and image files using JavaScript, then sends the files to your browser for previewing. If you choose, you can also output non-Java 2D frame versions so users with older browsers can view your output. There is an option to upload files to your Web server, and some programs also include a Batch Reduction feature, where you select a group of files and automatically reduce their dimensions for faster downloading.

Assessment

The programs in the TriVista Suite don't have a lot of bells and whistles, but they're all easy to use and don't take much learning — "quick and dirty" comes to mind. You can have a set of working files ready to upload in a very few minutes. The help files (*when they exist!*) and HTML output pages include instructions for linking your output to other Web pages. You'll probably want to edit some of TriVista's output, though, adding further text or navigation bars; this you should be able to do in your usual Web authoring program.

While I didn't have any problems using the programs, I did encounter some irritating tendencies, mainly inconsistencies across programs. For instance, each program supports a different set of file types; some include a batch reduction feature and some don't. Each help file is implemented differently, and some are easier to navigate than others.

For each program, you must choose specific files to display in the browse window — you can't just select a folder and automatically display all supported files.

Overall, the TriVista suite is a nice set of programs. You don't need any technical knowledge, and you can create some eye-catching pages to include in your Web site.

Cost and Availability

Individual products are available at prices ranging from US$15 for A Smaller Image to US$30 for 3D ImageScene. The full suite is available for US$49.95 as a download, or US$54.95 on CD-ROM. Purchase or download a trial version from www.trivista.com.

Minimum System Requirements

Pentium processor, Windows 95 or NT. A VRML 2.0 capable browser is required to view the results of 3D ImageCube and 3D ImageScene. ❑

igure 5. 3D ImageScene's wizard

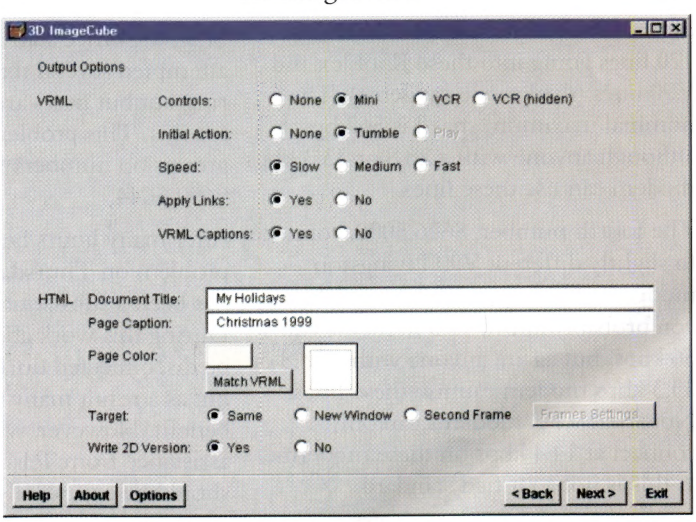


Figure 6. Selecting output options for 3D ImageCube

Internet Service Newsletter

These newsletters will inform our users of the progress and planned events pertaining to our Internet service. Although these newsletters will usually be published fortnightly (on melbpc.general) or monthly, this issue has been published sooner, to assist some users who have been having recent modem and phone line problems.

Overview of the Existing System

There are four phone numbers for the Melb PC Internet service, and we understand this is causing confusion at times for some members. Allow me to explain the reasoning behind the four different numbers.

First, there is the Intranet number 9690 5644. This allows users to obtain mail and read news but not to surf, which means time on this number does not count towards the two hours/day. So, you can collect mail and visit newsgroups after you have used up all your allocated time. There are 26 lines and the maximum speed possible is 33.6 kbps. The remaining three phone numbers are all for Internet access. Each number connects to a different group of modems.

The number 9686 4506 connects to the (now) old analogue Dataplex modem lines. There are 64 lines and the maximum speed possible is again 33.6 kbps.

The number 9934 9400 connects to the digital Livingston modems. There are 120 lines going into these K56Flex and V.90 lines (dual mode modems). The nominal maximum speed is 56 kbps, although anyone with a 28.8 or 33.3 kbps modem can use these lines.

The fourth number, 8626 5000, connects to slightly different V90 Livingston modems. There are 60 lines available. As you probably know, V.90 modems run at 56 kbps, but again, anyone with a 28.8 or 33.3 kbps modem can use these lines. Note that V.FC modems can only connect at 14.4 kbps on these modems, as this is not a ratified standard.

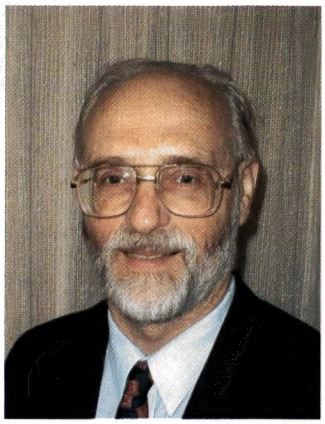
Soon there will be another phone number announced for the 60 new phone lines just installed on a different digital modem bank, called an Ascend Max 6000. After much research and discussion, the decision to purchase these modems was made because they have received very good reviews and hopefully will not encounter some of the problems experienced by some other brands. The new number for the Ascend modems will be made available as soon as these new lines are installed and tested.

Current Problems and Progress

In the last few weeks several events have occurred. A power outage appears to have damaged over 20 of the Dataplex modems. Telstra has altered the way we receive phone connections from their exchange; however, this will not affect you. New modems and new phone lines have been installed and are currently being tested before being made available soon. Some software changes have been made and the new computers have been brought into service. I know, one should make one change at a time. But this would take a lot of time and as busy lines are a real annoyance for many, it was decided to proceed as quickly as possible.

Dataplex, despite being one of Australia's largest modem manufacturers, will not provide any support for the modems that we bought from them for about $90,000 in July 1996. This is unfortunately regarded as a sign of progress. Jason, Stan, the office staff and I have attempted several fixes. Many lines still ring out but users are not being charged for this. This problem affects the rotary groups on numbers 9686 4506 and 9690 5644.

After many hours being spent on this problem on Thursday 14 October, there has been a substantial improvement. During this work about ten users had to be disconnected during the afternoon but as a result many more users will benefit. However, with more effort and assistance from Telstra this problem should be completely solved within another couple of weeks.



George Skarbek

New Lines

Installing the digital modems takes a lot more effort than when installing a normal modem at home. Before starting, the firmware must be upgraded to the latest version. Then they have to be configured to be told what phone number to answer, then given a range of IP numbers to assign to answering calls. The ISDN interface must be configured to connect correctly with the incoming OnRamp service from Telstra. Also, one must configure the call setup to initiate PPP protocol & PAP login. It must also be ensured that these modems talk correctly to the Radius authentication servers and static routes must be set up so that box can see the other boxes in our room. Most of this hard work has been done by Sean but for some, as yet unidentified reason this box answers the incoming modems but fails to establish the correct handshaking, therefore making communications impossible. We are hopeful that this problem will be overcome shortly.

Future Directions

As soon as the new modems are installed we will be monitoring the load on the line to the outside world. If the response starts to drop in peak periods all that will be required is for me to call Connect.com.au and ask them to increase our bandwidth. (Obviously we will pay them more money too.) As all protocols have been already established, about 15 minutes after that phone call we will have more data flowing.

Unfortunately, more data from Connect.com.au means more money and the capacity versus cost is a bit of a balancing effort for us. Many other ISPs have a volume charge or a time charge above a certain rate, so more usage means more money for them. We only collect $140 and guarantee a service with unlimited downloads for one year — therefore, there is the need for balance. The data charges are our single biggest cost by far.

Also, after these 60 lines are put into service we will monitor the busy lines very carefully. With the increased use of Internet and new members joining we may have to install an additional 30 modems, 30 lines and pay the commercial rates to Telstra for these lines. We may also have to purchase more bandwidth to cope with these additional lines.

Note

This newsletter will mainly interest the approximately 6000 members who are subscribers to our members' Internet service. Although many users look at the MOTD (Message Of The Day at www.melbpc.org.au/motd) at regular periods, some have their home page set to other sites and forget that this page contains relevant information. As well as the normal developments that are published there, I will be issuing regular newsletters to inform subscribers of planned changes, progress reports and general background education.

The MOTD page refers primarily to the Melb PC ISP service, so it cannot be reached if you are connected to another ISP.

STOP PRESS

60 new modems installed

Now for some very good news for the users of the Melb PC Internet service. After much testing the 60 new digital modems (Ascend Max 6000) are finally operational.

The new phone number is: 9697 4000.

We hope these lines will go a long way to reducing the busy signals experienced during the peak period. A new phone number is necessary in order to monitor the performance of these modems which are a different brand to the existing modems. This may help some members who have been experiencing occasional problems with the existing Livingston brand modems.

All users can dial into this number irrespective if you have a 9,600 bps modem or have the latest 56 kbps V90 modem. If you wish to experiment with these modems and initially do not wish to create yet another icon, you can bring up your existing dialler short cut and change the phone number to 96974000 just by overtyping. Next time you bring up that icon, the original number will appear. Note that if you modify the number in the icon (not shortcut) that is found under My Computer, Dial-up Networking, then the old number will be replaced.

I suggest that users dialing into the Dataplex modems on 9586 4506 should consider the new number if they have any problems at present. ❑

Can You Design a Web Page?

Would you like to win $500 and free Internet use for a year? That's the prize for the best new design for Melbourne PC User Group's external Home Page. There are no firm guidelines for the design; it will be left to your discretion as to what constitutes a good design and what information is required. All you have to do is look at www.melbpc.org.au and decide how to improve the image it presents to the outside world.

Considerations

Not all of the pages need to be altered but it is important that each page loads quickly. In the near future we are hoping to be able to put up a substantial portion of *PC Update* on the Web, so the design should make allowances for this.

The winning designs will become wholly owned property of Melb PC Internet Service. As subsequent changes and additions will be necessary from time to time, the design should have the flexibility to permit others to make changes as necessary without reference back to the originating author.

Prizes

The judging panel will consist of some members of the Internet team and some committee members. All will rate the designs on a scale of 1 to 10 and the entry with the highest points will be the winner. The second place getter will receive $200 and free Internet use for a year. Third prize is free Internet use for a year. All prizewinners will be announced in *PC Update* and on the Web. If any winning designs are by users who are not members, they will have to join Melb PC to claim their prize.

How to enter

To enter, just e-mail the URL where your submitted pages are posted, or e-mail your files Zipped into one file, to *webcomp@melbpc.org.au*. Please include your name and address as an associated text file in the code.

If anyone has any questions regarding this competition, please email webcomp@melbpc.org.au ❑

Entries will close at 6 pm on Friday 14 January 2000

Web Browsing Companions: uTOK and ThirdVoice

Noam Shifrin

One thing that stands out about the Internet is that it is never static. New software driven by small start-up companies hoping to hit it big and publicly list on their country's stock exchange is constantly being released to the public, generally for free (at least in the beginning of the software's development). Such programs are called Web browsing companions. Two programs that fit this category and that have made a recent splash are ThirdVoice (TV) and uTOK. They enable surfers to "leave" comments on the Web sites they pass through. If you think it sounds irrelevant and a little silly, think of the uses to which you could put such software. For example, if you were travelling overseas with some friends you could leave messages to them pointing out certain sections of useful Web sites and swap comments with them about it; if you worked in a company you could use the software to discuss and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of your competitor's Web site and if you wanted to mark up Web sites in a way that could only be accessed by yourself you could leave notes to yourself using this software.

How They Work

Both programs require the user to download client software. uTOK provides a dedicated client, while TV has separate controls that enable it to integrate either with Microsoft Internet Explorer (IE) or Netscape Navigator. Users of other operating systems and browsers other than Windows and IE/Netscape respectively are out of luck; both programs will only work with these browsers on the Windows platform (although the TV Web site says that the company is investigating the possibility of porting it to the Macintosh, Unix and Linux platforms). It should also be noted that since TV was originally developed for use with IE, the feature set of the ActiveX version is slightly more advanced than the Netscape version.

Each piece of software then requires the user to register with their network by creating a user name and password. Once logged in, users can post and read notes that reside on the company's server.

Features in Common

As mentioned above both programs allow the user to post notes on Web sites. There are two types of notes common to both programs; self and public. Self enables the user to post notes that are readable only to themselves while public notes are readable by anyone logged in to the network. Each note can be voted on. Once a note has been posted each program keeps track of the note so that if someone responds to it the original creator is notified. uTOK does it by popping up a tab beneath the Write a Note function and TV by e-mailing a notification to the e-mail address that the user registered with the network. A user can also keep track of the notes (s)he has posted through visiting a Web page generated by the network.

Each program also enables the user to join various groups and to create a group if they cannot find an existing group that covers the topic they are

Figure 1. Minimised view. ThirdVoice icon in top left corner.

Figure 2. ThirdVoice, buttonbar view.

Figure 3. ThirdVoice side window vie

Figure 4. ThirdVoice button on the standard button bar.

interested in. Each program uses the group function for different purposes (explained below).

ThirdVoice

The implementation of TV is completely different to that of uTOK. It comes in the form of a floating minimisable button bar that pops up in the Web browser window. There are three sizes it can take up: totally minimised *(Figure 1)*, main buttons visible *(Figure 2)* and side window form *(Figure 3)*. Obviously, the maximised size has the most functions available but takes up the most screen real estate. The software can be turned on or off via a toolbar button on the standard button bar *(Figure 4)*. Once turned on, a new instance of it will pop up in every new browser window, adding to the loading time of each window. This could be a disadvantage to those with slow computers.

Once maximised into a side window form, TV enables the user to view Self, Group, Public and Contact notes on the site that s(he) is visiting as well as Hot Notes (those written by TV commentators). Additionally, the user can view other notes on the site and the top sites by user traffic. When a user clicks on either of the four types of notes s(he) is shown an hierarchical tree of available notes *(Figure 5)*. This is useful because a user can quickly get a sense of the thread of notes and the changes in topic as the thread has progressed and thereby pick and choose which notes s(he) would like to view.

TV has a couple of distinctive features that are lacking in uTOK. Firstly it enables a user to post group notes to the group s(he) has joined. Other group members are then notified by e-mail. Secondly, TV provides the ability to e-mail an interesting note to the person of the user's choice via an envelope button at the bottom of each note. This means that people who don't have the client installed can view TV notes and even comment upon them via e-mail.

An extremely useful feature that still needs a bit of development to be indispensable is the Filter function. It can hide four different types of notes: Read, Spam/junk, Public and Unattached. Read notes are those that have already been read by the user, Spam/junk notes are self-explanatory (although it is not clear what criteria are applied by TV to distinguish these notes from other notes), Public notes are those readable by anyone and Unattached notes are notes which have been archived by TV after the text to which they are attached has been removed from the Web page.

Disadvantages

TV has a number of disadvantages. The first concerns the e-mail function. While the ability to e-mail notes to other people appears to be useful, if a group is active a lot of e-mail can be generated very quickly, clogging up your inbox and taking a lot of time to sort through. The same applies if you are an active poster who is topical. Each time a reply is posted to one of your notes, another e-mail is sent to your registered account resulting in a large increase in messages.

The second concerns the actual nature of the program. Because TV is not a separate program it tends to run more slowly than uTOK. It takes longer to download all the notes and then (optionally) place the inline markers on the Web page. Presumably, this will only get worse as more users use the software — not a comforting thought.

Tied to the implementation of the program is the problem concerning notes whose attached text is removed from the Web. Each note posted must be anchored to a piece of text the note is presumably commenting upon. This makes sense until the text is removed. For example, a story is updated on the CNN Web site (a site that has a large number of posters). TV has addressed this problem by providing a View Unattached Note function (such notes have a blue background). However, this requires the user to expand the TV bar

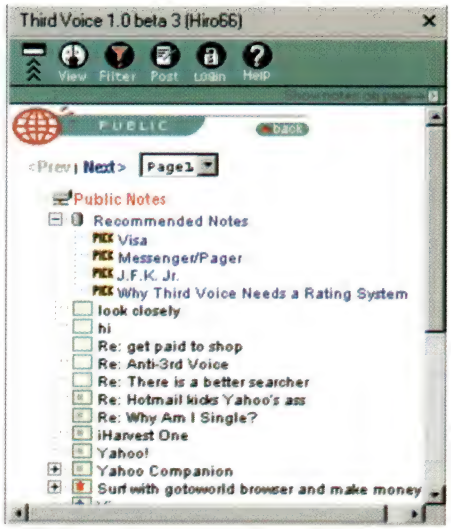


Figure 5. Hierarchical tree of available notes

to the side window form, which is annoying as the user doesn't know whether there are any unattached notes unless TV is in side window form, taking up maximum screen real estate.

Last, it appears that the company that owns TV has been thinking of the future by providing space for advertisers to place an ad if the service becomes popular enough. At the moment the space is taken up by a small TV ad (which leads me to believe that the potential is there for advertisers to take out an ad, otherwise why advertise TV to people who are already using it). This may not be an annoyance to other users but with ads bombarding people from the television, free Web space providers, free e-mail providers and the major commercial Web sites another ad space becomes a bit irritating.

Advantages

As mentioned above TV enables a user to: directly post to the groups that s(he) has joined, send an interesting note to anyone online via e-mail, filter content via a number of categories and view unattached notes. When it is in toolbar mode, TV takes up a smaller piece of screen than uTOK in equivalent mode *(Figure 6)*. When individual posters can be filtered out (along the lines of a kill file in newsreaders and filters in e-mail programs) the filter function will become indispensable.

In terms of content, TV seems to be ahead. While most of the content depends on the users using the software, the company does have a

more developed Web site (as opposed to uTOK) and has provided columnists who post interesting and thoughtful discussions. uTOK needs to catch up in this area.

uTOK

uTOK has taken a different approach from TV. As mentioned above, it is a standalone program, resulting in a greater speed when locating notes as the user changes Web sites. Upon registration the user receives an individual uTOK user number that can be used by others to send notes to the user individually. After installing it, the user finds a new icon in the system tray. There are 3 different icons: a blue horizontal pencil indicates that there are no uTOK notes for the current Web site *(Figure 7)*, a green vertical pencil indicates that there are uTOK notes posted for this Web site *(Figure 8)* and a red upright pencil with an exclamation mark next to it means that there are waiting notes for the user *(Figure 9)*. When the icon is clicked, a Quantities panel pops up. This is a floating panel that can be moved anywhere on the screen *(Figure 10)*. It displays the user uTOK number, name and rating, the current URL the program is accessing, whether any public, private or self notes are available, the write a note button, the waiting note tab and the menu and location buttons.

The Public button is self-explanatory as is the Self Notes button. The Private Note button gives the user access to notes written by another for just that user. The Notes by Topic button enables the user to sort the given notes on a particular site by generic topic. There is a set number of topics. For example, site review, opinion, jobs etc.

The Notes by Group permits a user to sort notes according to the groups the user has joined and the poster has chosen to use.

After a user clicks on the type of note available (presuming there are notes of that type available) the Headers List pops up *(Figure 11)*. It enables the user to view notes on a number of bases: by date, by user, by threaded topic, by group, by author and by subject. At the bottom of the list are two buttons. One pops up a random note and the other fetches more notes from the UTOK server.

Advantages

uTOK has an interesting rating system. As mentioned above, notes can be sorted according to user rating. All users start with 3 stars. The greater the number of "thumbs-up" votes received for each note the higher the user rating climbs, to a maximum of 5 stars. The converse can also take place, the more "thumbs-down" votes received per note the lower the user rating drops, to a minimum of 1 star. Clearly there is an incentive to make sure that the notes that are posted receive as many thumbs up as possible. This is a good thing considering how much "noise" there is on the Internet compared to "signal".

The individual UTOK user number is an excellent feature in that it enables others who are using the client to find the specific user if they know their number. Once found, a page listing who they are, their e-mail address and various other information can be displayed *(Figure 12)*. Using the Friends Finder under the menu button from the Quantities panel they can be added to the user's address book, enabling the user to post private notes for their friend. Each user has an address book *(Figure 13)*, which holds the information necessary to post notes for their friends or group their friends into teams (the equivalent in TV would be groups) and thereby post notes for their teams.

Disadvantages

uTOK lacks a couple of features that have been built into TV. uTOK does not have a filter function, which means that anyone who wants to spam uTOK users can do so at will. This is a serious drawback if UTOK becomes successful as advertisers follow users onto each new popular tool. uTOK also lacks the ability to e-mail interesting notes to people who do not use uTOK. This is not so much a disadvantage as an omission. It would be nice to send notes to family, friends and business colleagues who do not use uTOK.

A further shortcoming is the lack of ability to view notes whose Web page has disappeared. These notes remain archived on uTOK's server but are inaccessible to the user. This is a major drawback for sites that have a high turnover of pages. At least TV enables such notes to be viewed. This is certainly something that needs to be fixed by the uTOK development team.

The uTOK Web site is very simple. It offers no content over and above what users put in and only exhibits the groups created that day on the front page in contrast to TV which makes an attempt to list all the groups on their front page. There doesn't seem to be a lot of content available on the site. However their FAQ and User Guide comprehensively covers most if not all conceivable queries.

Conclusion

The concept of browsing companion software is a good one. It facilitates a new and interesting level of interaction and commentary on Web sites. This could be a great feedback format, inspiring Webmasters to tailor content and format to users' desires without having to directly survey each user. As with all first release software, much development is needed. TV could do with some other way of notifying users of responses to their own notes, private notes and group notes while uTOK

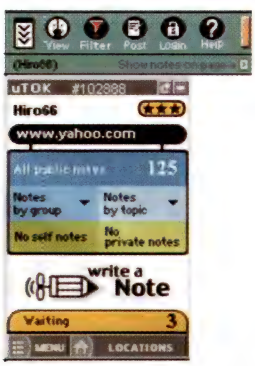


Figure 6. Button views, compare the sizes.

Figure 7. Blue pencil: no uTOK notes on this site.

Figure 8. Green pencil: uTOK notes available.

Figure 9. Red pencil: notes waiting for me!

Figure 10. uTOKs floating Quantities panel.

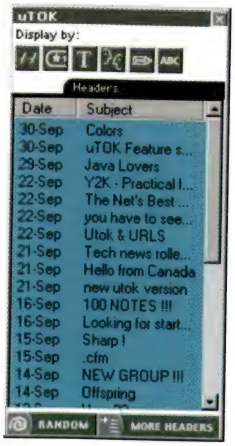


Figure 11. uTOK Header List.

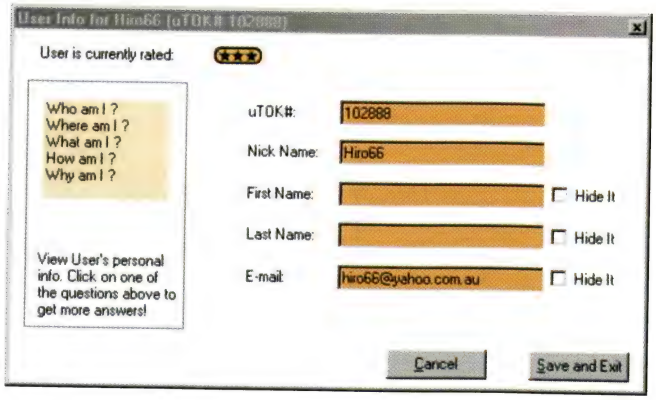


Figure 12. uTOK user information window.

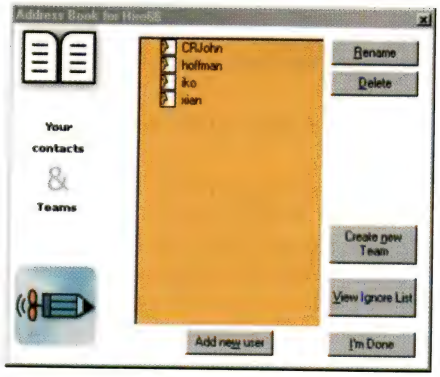


Figure 12. User information address book.

could do with a filter function and a way of viewing notes whose Web page has been removed.

Each program has its own unique features. uTOK has great versatility in sorting posted notes as well as ease of access and speed, while TV can more easily involve others who do not have the software in discussions. Both programs are only as good as their users so the more people who go out and try the software the better (hopefully) the level of commentary will be. Try it out and see what you think. One thing is certain, both these companies will go on trying to put in more useful features, streamline the interface and fix design problems to ensure a better user experience. The user is the winner.

It should be noted that there are other browsing companion type software programs available for download: Odigo, Gooey and ICQsurf. The difference between them and uTOK/TV is that they offer chatting capability with other Web surfers on the same site.

Addendum

Since the time of writing the original article both companies have released updated versions of their programs. TV has added the option to show or not show notes for a given page and is now compatible with Netscape as well as IE. The uTOK development team has addressed a number of its shortcomings. It now allows users to email an interesting note to a non-uTOK using friend and has dumped the annoying feature of popping up multiple browser windows for each waiting note a user clicks on. A couple of extra features have been added as well. Users can now import skins much like Winamp pioneered however at this time of writing only a couple of skins have appeared and it is unclear as to how a user can design their own. Secondly, a new feature called Poll Notes has been introduced. Users can create a poll on a question of their own choosing. Once voted on, the voter is able to see what is the percentage of each response.

URLs:
ThirdVoice: www.thirdvoice.com
uTOK: www.utok.com

A better sense of aesthetic design has gone into the new Web site with different areas clearly marked out and group organisation much easier to understand. For example, the top groups are easily available on the home page. In short the new releases have confirmed my opinion that uTOK is pulling further ahead of TV in design and features.

About the Author

Noam Shifrin, hiro66@yahoo.com.au is a Law/Arts student at Monash University, Clayton campus. His interest with computers began when as a Year 7 student he first bought a US computer mail order magazine in the days where a 300dpi scanner cost $2000. His interest now lies in things Internet, specifically reviews and social comment. ❑

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Special Interest Group Meetings

SIG Coordinator, Dave Botherway

Special Interest Groups (SIGs) are the life blood of Melbourne PC User Group. Large and small groups of members with specific interests meet regularly to discuss and indulge their interests in a wide range of topics.

This is where Melb PC membership really pays off and you gain all the wonderful benefits. Enhance your computer knowledge, widen your circle of friends who have similar interests and occasionally, similar problems to solve.

Attending a SIG and meeting other members not only helps to enhance your knowledge and understanding of the specific topic. Often you will see presentations by visiting experts and the value of that is clear to all.

Attend a SIG soon. All members are most welcome. This is part of your Melb PC membership, so feel free to contact any of the conveners listed here. Ask them about future meetings; ask them about the format of their meetings and anything else you need to get started.

Dave

Access (Database)

access-sig@melbpc.org.au
2nd Monday
6.30 – 8.30 pm
Ray Watson
9576 8520 BH & AH

Assembly & Other Languages

alt-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/alt
1st Thursday
7.00 – 10.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Felix Hofmann
0408 023 423 BH
9523 5400 AH
Don McKenzie
9521 3060 BH
This is a technical programming SIG not confined to specific computer languages. Bring your algorithms, your code and your questions.

Ballarat

ball-sig@melbpc.org.au
1st Thursday
7.30 – 9.45 pm
(except school holidays)
Ballarat & Clarendon College
614 Mair St, Ballarat
VicRoads map 254 L12
Ken Smith
5332 7851 BH & AH
Ballarat is a general purpose SIG, usually we have no specific topic; it suits everyone at present to let the meeting run in a direction that is topical on the night. From time to time we have a guest speaker/ presenter on something of particular interest to us at the time but free form seems the norm at present.

Bendigo

bend-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://users.netcon.net.au/joe/melbpc.html
2nd Wednesday
7.30 – 10.00 pm
Girton Grammar School
105 Mackenzie St, Bendigo
(Vine Street entrance, then follow the signs)
VicRoads map 282 K14
Alistair Shaw
alistair@primus.com.au
0417 688 705 BH & AH
Joe Henry
0408 134 404 BH & AH
The Bendigo SIG is a regional group of computer users based in Bendigo. Young, old, experienced, beginners, all are catered for. Each meeting consists of some presentation, where interesting, useful or helpful information is shared. Question and answer sessions are also a great help for those with computer related queries.

Clarion

clar-sig@melbpc.org.au
4th Wednesday
7.00 – 10.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Chris Livingstone
9431 1897 BH & AH

Communications

comm-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/comms/
2nd Wednesday
7.00 – 9.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Philip Lew
9822 2998 BH (brief calls)
The Communications SIG focusses on all aspects of computer connectivity. Topics include modem communications (BBS and Internet dialup); Client /Server software, HTML and other Internet related topics. We also cover topics on Computer Networking (LANs and WANs) and other relevant general telecommunications issues of interest to the well connected PC user.

Daytime

day-sig@melbpc.org.au
2nd Thursday
10.00 am – 12 noon
Melb PC SIG Room
Don Buchanan
9509 7119 BH & AH
Graeme Minto
9440 5030 BH & AH

Digital Photo

http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/digip/
3rd Monday, 7.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Thom Lyons
9525 9793 or 0417 525 171

East

east-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.vicnet.net.au/~mpceast
2nd Tuesday
7.30 – 10.00 pm
Multinet Theatrette
200 Rooks Rd, Vermont
Melway map 62 H2
Keith Beresford
9733 5044 AH
9736 2515 BH
Margaret Brown
9874 5778

East Workshop

east-ws@melbpc.org.au
http://www.vicnet.net.au/~eastsig/workshop/
Sunday following the East SIG meeting,
10.30 am – 2.30 pm
Multinet Theatrette
200 Rooks Rd, Vermont
Melway map 62 H2
Ken Gubbins
9898 5478 PH/FAX
*The **East Workshop** is hands-on, practical, interactive and runs on the principle "Show me how, and I'll do it with your assistance". We handle "how to upgrade", "software doesn't run", "slow computer", "no sound, no video" problems and more. Bring your computer along.*

*The East **Beginners Group** demonstrates how to set up and maintain a computer, how to run software, scan documents, process images, sort out error messages, etc. All procedures are repeated (slowly), until members feel confident with the new knowledge.*

Foothills (Boronia)

foothills-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.wasser.com.au/foothills
1st Sunday
(except January)
10.00 am – 3.00 pm
Progress Hall (rear entrance)
134 Boronia Road
(near Dorset Road.)
Melways map 64 K9
Jim McNabb
9754 4862 AH

Genealogy

http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/geneal/
Sunday following the East SIG meeting,
12.00 am – 3.00 pm
Multinet Theatrette
200 Rooks Rd, Vermont
Melway map 62 H2
Bruno Dik
9733 4585
The Genealogy SIG is for those beginning genealogy and for those who are advanced but need more computer knowledge to move ahead. Members' trials, tribulations and expertise are openly discussed and freely shared in this self-help group.

Graphics

graph-sig@melbpc.org.au
3rd Monday
7.30 – 10.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Yahya Abdal-Aziz
9562 1023 AH (brief calls)
The Graphics SIG explores issues related to computer graphics software and hardware. Members provide demonstrations each month, covering areas such as paint programs, animation, graphics programming, printing, and scanning. Visitors are invited to bring along their graphics problems.

Hardware

hardware-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/hw/
3rd Wednesday
7.00 – 11.00 pm

Melb PC SIG Room
Felix Hofmann
0408 023 423 BH
9523 5400 AH
Thom Lyons
9525 9793 or 0417 525 171
We deal with all levels of PC Hardware from chips to complete networks of computers. Memebrs are invited to bring their questions and/or their hardware to the meeting for advice / assistance

LUBe

lube-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/lube/
3rd Thursday
7.00 – 10.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Thom Lyons
9525 9793 or 0417 525 171

MACE

(Melbourne Atari Computer Enthusiasts)
mace-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/mace/
2nd Sunday
10.00 am – 2.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Graham Hurford
9416 1126 AH
Roger Davies
9879 1109 BH & AH
Enquiries 0500 818 448
The Atari SIG is dedicated to the the joy of Atari. The SIG is fast, furious and action packed. We welcome all owners and former owners (we know you are out there) to visit us and join in the fun; its a soul thing.

Music

music-sig@melbpc.org.au
2nd Thursday
7.30 – 9.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Yahya Abdal-Aziz
9562 1023 AH *(brief call please)*
Eric Best
5781 1224 AH

New Users, East

newe-sig@melbpc.org.au
2nd Tuesday
7.30 – 10.00 pm
(except January)
St Mark's Anglican Church
Cnr Canterbury & Burke Rds,
Camberwell
Melway map 45 J10
Doug Brooke
9822 3458 BH & AH
This group caters for the particular needs of prospective and new computer users, new members having machine operating or system problems, and those new members wishing to increase their understanding of their equipment.

Northern Suburbs

north-sig@melbpc.org.au
4th Wednesday
7.00 pm – 10.00 pm
Communications City,
Suite 3, 1/7 Balaka Place,
Bundoora
Kristian Spiers
9466 8622 or 0413 627 578
Mark Trickett
9480 6695

OS/2

os2-sig@melbpc.org.au
4th Tuesday
6.30 – 10.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
John Angelico
9544 8792 BH & AH
The OS/2 SIG offers technical and user-level support for all users of OS/2, covering versions from 1.x to Warp Server for e-Business, plus native application software. Monthly meetings feature news, software reviews, tips and tricks and details of latest updates. Regular technical support days focus on installation of OS/2, support for OS/2 applications and in-depth hardware assistance.

Programming

prog-sig@melbpc.org.au
2nd Tuesday,
7.30 – 10.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Ross Hall
5428 6470 AH
9699 4000 BH
Andrew Callaway
9619 4067 BH

Quicken

quicken-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://viv-martin.hypermart.net/quicken.html
4th Thursday
7.00 - 9.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Viv Martin
9583 5372 BH & AH

Retired & Interested Persons

rip-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/rip/
10.00 am – 12 noon
4th (not last) Friday
Lutheran Church,
25 Cypress Ave,
Glen Waverley
Melway map 62 A9
Ken Thomas
9884 5309 AH
Noel Peters

Teen Game Development

youth-sig@melbpc.org.au
3rd Saturday
2.00 – 5.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Tobias Cohen
The Teen Game Development SIG focuses on game development for Under 18s with Games Factory, Klick'n'Play, MZX, Delphi, VB, Qbasic, GWBASIC, BASICA, Assembly, C, C++, Turbo C++, Visual C++, C++ Builder and more. Dedicated to teenagers interested in learning or furthering their skills in computer game development.

Video Editing (General)

video-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.vicnet.net.au/~vidsig/
4th Monday
7.00 – 9.30 pm
45 Talbot Ave, Balwyn
Melway map 46 E8
Albert Vanzet
9439 1768 BH & AH
The aim of the Video Editing (General) SIG is to assist the amateur videographer to convert holiday, family recordings and documentaries into pleasant and entertaining video productions. We exchange ideas and experiences about the use of linear and simple non-linear computer video editing programs.

Video Editing (Non-linear)

videonl-sig@melbpc.org.au
1st Tuesday (incl Nov)
7.30 – 10.00 pm
Melb PC SIG room
Lawrie Weston
9742 3738
Non-Linear Video Editing SIG was formed as an offshoot of the original PC Video Editing SIG when it was obvious that the two forms of PC video editing (Linear and Non-Linear) covered too wide a scope for just one SIG. The original SIG then became the Linear Editing SIG. If you don't know the difference, come along to both and find out which suits your needs.

Warragul

warr-sig@melbpc.org.au
1st Friday
7.30 – 10.00 pm
Warragul Education Centre
Smith St, Warragul
VicRoads map 337 Q8
Lindsay Perston
5623 1756 AH

Web Development

webdev-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/webdev/
4th Monday,
7.00 – 10.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Thom Lyons
9525 9793 or 0417 525 171

Web Development Workshop

webdev-sig@melbpc.org.au
2nd Saturday, 10.30 am
Melb PC SIG Room
Thom Lyons
9525 9793 or 0417 525 171
(members may bring their own systems)

Western Suburbs

west-sig@melbpc.org.au
http://www.angelfire.com/or/westsig
4th Tuesday
7.00 – 9.00 pm
Our Lady's Tennis Club,
Sunshine. (near corner Cornwall & Devonshire)
Melway map 26 K12
Robert Mead
9312 5427 AH

Windows

win-sig@melbpc.org.au
1st Monday
7.00 – 9.30 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Lynn Pollock
9598 3186 AH
9533 5002 BH

Windows NT

http://www.melbpc.org.au/sig/nt/
2nd Tuesday
7.00 pm
Melb PC SIG Room
Andrew Callaway
9619 4067 BH

Updates/Corrections

Please send to:
Dave Botherway
SIG Coordinator
daveb@melbpc.org.au

SIG Meeting Reports

Daytime

by Don Buchanan

October

Graeme Minto introduced our presenter, being Don Buchanan, with a variety of Internet-related tips leading to a live demonstration of BuddyPhone voice connection program.

Beginning with suggestions on controlling/adding desktop icons, Don then moved on to a couple of programs that are probably already inside the system, and can help tell the operator how effectively the processor is being used. Namely, Sysmon (system monitor), tells speeds of bytes sent or received, and kernel processor percentage usage. Resource Meter tells how much percentage remains of various resources .

Then on to a short display of MailCall, plus our Internet Timer Monitor, which has been promoted recently.

We were then able to spend time on BuddyPhone, where to set up its configuration, where to fine-tune its microphone/headphone/speaker settings.

Also how we make a phone call to a person's email address or IP number. Or we can make/wait for a random call, providing the other party is also using BuddyPhone. It ended with a live demo, successfully talking to other parties on other continents.

Then back to Graeme for Q & A to finish a very lively morning.

November

"The Scanner Place" will have given us a scanner demonstration, including some of the feedback from the members about the most useful aspects requested of this presentation.

December

SOS will be the format for the meeting. Stands for "Share Our Solutions". If you want to share your computer problem and your solution with the other members, please see Graeme (or Don) before the meeting actually starts, so that we can arrange some sort of programme order, and fit all into the available time.

In the year 2000, starting with the February meeting, we will be again arranging the subjects of our monthly presenters as closely as possible in line with the percentage of popularity resulting from forms filled in by members attending previous meetings.

The last time that I saw relevant figures, our Daytime SIG ranked about third in the order of attendance numbers, so we must reasonably be answering the computer needs and interests of our attendees plus the fact that we follow our SIG name and meet on a weekday daytime .

Digital

October

We started early at 6.00 pm with a scanning party for those of us that needed images done. At 7.00 pm we had a short demo on imaging stitching and pasting using Picture Publisher. At 7:30 pm we took a break and resumed our meeting for open forum and showing of printed work. We also had a short discussion on forensic work using digital cameras. At 9:30 pm we joined the Graphics SIG for a lesson on how to properly use the new slide scanner and some work on all the special effects in Picture publisher. As usual it was standing room only and all seats were filled!

Our November meeting will include some work on the latest version of PHOTOSHOP (ver 5.5), the usual subjects and the SIG Leader will be there early for scanning.

East

by Margaret Brown

The East SIG continues to attract over 120 members and guests to the excellent Vermont facility, which offers great presentation facilities and ample off-road parking.

At the October meeting our speakers were Peter Selig (long-time Dial Help adviser and PC tutor, George Skarbek and Dave Botherway.

Peter explained and demonstrated the procedures required to configure a machine with multiple user profiles. Each user having their own password and an individually customised system set-up, ideal for a family situation.

George gave an overview of Office 2000 with valuable advice concerning the advisability or otherwise of upgrading.

Dave explained the advantages of installing Net Launch, a program which allows instant access to several ISP addresses from the TaskBar. Another tool he demonstrated offered multiple Clipboard entries. These applications and also the tutorial information from Peter's demonstration were available at the meeting on disk.

At East we endeavour to offer a program of interest to members with many levels of computer expertise and plan to continue the present meeting format into the New Year.

7.00 pm - A small group of true beginners meets to discuss their problems with Stewart Bedford.

7.30 pm - 10.00 pm Main meeting.

Q&A. George Skarbek offers advice and welcomes input from members, he also keeps us up to date with the latest Melb PC Internet developments.

Dave Botherway, SIG Coordinator and Melb PC Committee member, gives an update of news from these areas.

We usually feature two speakers, one from within our group and one invited. Suggestions for future topics are encouraged.

Guests are welcome at the monthly meetings but membership is required to attend the Sunday hands-on workshop, training sessions or be able to accept the raffle first prize.

Future planned presentations include ink cartridge refilling, Flight Simulation and Web page authoring. Please contact *east-sig@melbpc.org.au* to request e-mail notification of exact dates and agendas of future meetings.

We also plan to repeat the very successful East weekend away — probably in autumn, the topic yet to be decided.

For more detailed information visit the home page *http://ww.vicnet.net.au/~mpceast.*

East Workshop

October

The Workshop ran concurrently and harmoniously with the Beginners and Genealogy Groups, and encountered the usual types of problems: lack of documentation, of drivers, sound and video conflicts. A subtle problem

associated with changing the sound drivers — one computer also had a faulty sound card! More owners wanted to know how to arrange for multiple booting - and now that Linux is becoming more understood there is a keen demand for multiple operating systems.

The Internet continued to tax the skills of our members, for one must have ALL the settings (proxies, DNS, etc.) correctly entered. A new internal modem was fitted to a machine in minutes, but the allocation of the IRQ and configuring took hours of trial and error. External modems are dearer but usually easier to set up. The same can be said for SCSI versus parallel-port Zip drives — SCSI has a faster transfer rate but can be very hard to set up efficiently. A monitor problem was easily diagnosed by changing over to another monitor - the original WAS faulty, it had burnt out.

East Beginners' Group

The "gun" or projector was used to give a large-screen image for the Beginners and Genealogy demonstrations — no more squinting at tiny monitor screens!

How innocent can a beginner be? Do YOU trust what your computer is displaying? Sadly, new users DO trust the messages on the screen, especially when they are informed that their hard drive is only 1 percent defragmented and need not be "defragged".
Demonstrations were given of many common problems and how to escape! A locked up program is easily fixed by pressing the keys "Ctrl+Alt+Delete" simultaneously (DO NOT reboot) — up comes a dialog box showing which program is not responding; just click on "End Task" to get the computer running smoothly again. Shortcuts and desktop icons were created and trashed with glee. Simple image formats and conversions from one format to another were demonstrated. Future sessions will repeat popular segments if requested, for there are always beginners in Word, Excel, Scanning, and Imagery.

Foothills

October

The first meeting of our SIG was a great success held on Sunday the 3 October at the historic Boronia Progress Hall, Boronia. Some 20+ members attended and after a brief intro by Jim McNabb we swung straight into activities.

First up was a session designed for beginners, basic beginners. Ably lead by Gary Taylor it covered basic aspects of computing. This is a much requested subject and many novices are looking for very basic info. Well done, Gary it was very much appreciated.

After a well deserved break for lunch Bob Wise then discussed upgrades: things like cost, equipment, what the future may hold, and the types of upgrades members could be looking at, the requirements of modern programs, traps and pitfalls to avoid.

Then advanced Word and a lot of its shortcuts, vagaries, etc etc, were demonstrated. It was an eye-opener as to what can be done with this program. Graphics manipulation was also demonstrated as an answer to questions of members.

The meeting concluded with an open forum to allow attendees to express what they would like to see demonstrated or explained in the future.

For more information about the Foothills SIG check our Web site *http://www.wasser.com.au/foothills*

East Genealogy

by Bruno Dik

An extremely enthusiastic group was introduced to Rob Gray who demonstrated the work he had done on his family tree. A very lively discussion followed where he described the methods he had used and what can be done to find more information about one's ancestors. The next subject for the group was classed as a failure! — we were using a very slow CD Reader to browse a CD and the transfer/ interpretation of information into Wordpad was too far too slow. At future meetings, two computers will be used (one for Beginners and the other for the Genealogy), connected by a switchbox.

However, all was not lost: information was shown about the early (convict) arrivals to Australia, specifically to NSW. The records of the appalling conditions whilst travelling to Australia and their first days here were dreadful, to say the least.

Some of the features in Ultimate Family Tree were shown to an increasingly bemused throng, especially the interesting and useful "extra"s which no self-respecting genealogist can do without? The Glossary was a wealth of archaic terms and fascinating insights into the state of marriage and relationships only a few centuries ago. The mind boggles!

The November meeting will commence with an account of a trip around the Archival Repository in Forest Hill where there are 53 kilometres of shelving, and other wonders.

Graphics

by Myles Strous

October

Questions were few at the October meeting. After some discussion about techniques on the new TV show on ABC, Walking WIth Dinosaurs, we went straight into presentations.

Yahya showed us Felix, an amusing animated cat that lives on your desktop. You can get other ScreenMates at *http://www.screenmates.com.*

Myles demonstrated Moho, a 2D spline-based animation program, which also has the feature of adding bones to a character for manipulation. Using animated filled spline shapes, this program is an easy alternative to painting each frame. A functional demo version is available from *http://www.lostmarble.com.*

Ken presented his Rubik's Cube program, a program that allows you to manipulate a virtual Rubik's Cube on the screen. It has an innovative view showing the outside of three faces and the inside of the remaining three, enabling easy visualisation of the whole cube in three dimensions. The program also contained routines for solving the cube, either running automatically, or step-by-step allowing you to follow and understand each step.

Thom Lyons demonstrated the use of the slide scanner, recently purchased by Melb PC, displaying its excellent resolution. He also demonstrated some manipulation of the slides with Micrografx Picture Publisher, with special emphasis on the range of filters included.

Themes for the remainder of 1999:
November : Ray-tracing software.
• Demo of POV-Ray and utilities;
• Demo of 3D animation and rendering with Animation:Master;
• Answers to your graphics questions.
December : The Christmas party.
• Computer-generated animations and mages;
• Make your own Christmas cards;
• Conviviality, philosophising and general discussion; graphics questions and answers ARE permitted.

OS/2

by John Angelico

Nov/Dec/Jan/Feb

Our October planning meeting will not have been held when the deadline for this issue of the magazine closes so all readers interested in OS/2 doings in Melbourne will need to check for final details by emailing me *talldad@melbpc.org.au* or by checking the SIG Web page at *http://www.netstra.com.au/~terry/os2sig.html*

In the meantime we wish all *PC Update* readers the very best for the holiday season, and the safest non-Y2K New Year. See you all again in 2000!

Quicken

by Bob Mayston

October

With the approach of year 2000 we are reminded of the impending implementation of the GST due to commence July 2000. Over the next few months the Quicken SIG will look at how programs such as Quicken and Quickbooks can accommodate the new tax system.

Starting with the October meeting to be held Thursday 28, we will take a preliminary look at how the new tax can be recorded in Quickbooks V5 and V6, since this is the most popular program for business invoicing.

With v5 the tax must be applied as a one-line addition to a sub-total of items, while in V6 a separate column shows the amount of tax against each item. There appears no clarification to date whether invoices should be rendered as "tax inclusive" or the tax shown separately.

Future meetings will consider how Quicken in various versions, can handle the tax either with or without the Quickinvoice module which now only comes with the Business version of Quicken.

Our meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of each month December excepted, at the SIG rooms. Contact Viv Martin if you have a problem for discussion or better bring a disk with the problem. We also invite suggestions for future topics related to Quicken/Quickbooks and associated accounting or book keeping items.

Video Editing General

by Albert Vanzet

With a deadline for the December issue before we have our October meeting we cannot report on its success or failure. Suffice to say that apart from a demonstration of sound with video, some time was devoted to the future format of our meetings during the new year, 2000.

In response to requests and suggestions from our members, future meetings will include a number of segments designed to help our members become more acquainted with their computer and its relationship with their video editing program and about the art of video in general.

The format will be as follows:

- Introduction.
- What's New: Members are asked to submit any news items that relate to video editing.
- Computer Bits: Don Watson-Brown will help us understand the terminology used to describe the various requirements and the workings of our computers with our video editing programs.
- The Art of Video: This segment will be devoted to the technique of video making and include such subjects as camera handling, continuity, story board, narration, etc. Members who feel confident to talk about any of these subjects are invited to take the floor at our meetings.
- The coffee break: During the break, members can view or purchase video/video-editing equipment that members have brought in for sale.
- A demonstration or presentation: This will include presentations or talks by invited speakers or demonstrations by our own members about aspects of our programs or other matters related to our video editing hobbies.

It is expected that the year 2000 will bring some new video editing programs on the market that fit into our SIG's environment. We may acquire some of these programs ourselves and individual members may purchase others. We invite those members who use those programs to present these new programs at our meetings.

December Combined Meeting

We remind all members that the two Video Editing SIGs will hold a combined "*End-of-the-Year*" meeting on Tuesday, the 7th of December, at 45 Talbot Avenue, Balwyn, staring at 7.30 pm. We have planned a presentation by one of Melbourne's leading photographic retailers of currently available video cameras and what we can expect to see in the year 2000.

We invite members of both SIGs to present a video at that meeting to show our regular members and all other interested persons the sum and substance of our hobby.

Warragul

by Lindsay Perston

Warragul Computer User Group meets on the first Friday of each month (except January). Doors open at 7.00 pm. You can come in and chat with us before the meeting starts at 7.30pm.

Our group uses the well-appointed meeting rooms in the Warragul Education Centre (corner Smith & Albert Streets). Average attendance is twenty five. Off street car parking is available beside the venue. Look for our sign at the entrance.

Our meeting on 3 December will be a ‘dual program’ night. Those who wish, will bring their computers (with a network card) and play multi-player games, while others will engage in the presentation topic ‘Tips & Tricks on the Net’ in an adjacent room. This night is also our ‘traditional Pizza night’ (softdrinks provided).

The first meeting for 2000, will be the Annual General Meeting, 4 February. Presentation topic for this night is (some more) Tips & Tricks – this time for commonly used software such as MS Windows, Word, Publisher, etc.

The members of WCUG extend an invitation to Melbourne members and their friends, to attend any of our monthly meetings in Warragul.

We aim to provide for, and to help those who are new to computers. Those who are more conversant with ‘the computer scene’ are happy to share their knowledge and to learn more from each other. Come along and enjoy an evening in the warm and friendly atmosphere of our group.

Windows

by John Swale

Around 30 people attended the October meeting where the key interest was writing CD-ROMs. We started with a question and answer session conducted by Lynn Pollock *(see Random Access, Page 43)*.

John Swale demonstrated his HP CD Writer that he uses for data backups. Although the unit is capable of rewriting special CDs, he does not use it this way. Blank CDs can be purchased for around $2 and can be read on any CD-ROM while the re-writable CDs are more expensive, slower to create, and can only be read on RW CD units. The HP came with a range of software including Easy CD Creator, which can be used to make data or audio CDs. Alternatively the HP software can be used to format the CD so that it can be written to by normal software including Explorer. Once you have finished the session the CD can be left "open" so that more data can be written to it, or it can be closed off. If it is left open not all CD-ROMs will be able to read it. Closing it allows other drives to read it but imposes an overhead of 15-20 MB if you want to re-open the CD for further data writes.

Ross Alcock demonstrated his writer and his use of Easy CD Pro. This software wouldn't recognise his IDE CD-ROM because the writer was SCSI. To do a CD copy he had to use Explorer to drag and drop the data into the Data Track window. When used for audio CDs he found you can get about one hour of music per CD. One critical aspect is to ensure that you keep the data flowing to the writer. This means turning off screensavers and any other software that may interrupt the data stream. It is wise to do a Test run that simulates writing to the CD to ensure that you will not be creating drink coasters. Once you have your setup correct, you can write the CDs without testing first. You can copy data to the hard disk from other media to get a faster transfer rate or if you want to make multiple copies. Ross suggested that the Nero ROM Burning software will do everything you need for creating all types of CDs. It costs around US$70.

Another member connects his turntable to the sound card and uses Cool Edit to copy LPs to hard disk. Each side is copied as a one track .WAV file.

Lynn closed the meeting reminding everyone that when creating CDs one has to bear in mind the requirements of the copyright and licensing conditions.

Windows NT

by Andrew Callaway

Well, we did it. We managed to install Windows 2000 on a machine. (Not a BIG machine I hasten to add.)

We did not take a note of the exact time we started but we estimated it must have taken about 40 minutes. There wasn't a lot of head scratching and starting again, so that would be pretty close to full-time installing. The install advised us that Windows 2000 would use over 500 MB.

Once this was done, we had a look at some of its features. There was an introduction on the CD, and I was a little confused that it was telling us of some features "New to Windows 2000" that I have definitely seen before. However, there are a few new things worth mentioning. As well as disk compression on the fly, it also gives you file encryption. It supports both NTFS and FAT32, and there is more security built in.

Some things, however, we thought are a little dubious. It has a feature where the most commonly used menu items are placed in a more accessible place on the menu, whilst others are shuffled away out of sight. I can see problems with this. I already get "I can't find XXX on the menu. I'm sure it was here yesterday" from my users. Imagine the mayhem when menu items really do start moving about!

We tried to connect two machines together on a small network, but unfortunately we ran out of time. ❑

Members Free Ads

Laser printer Mannesman Tally 906.
Works fine on self-test.
$60 Includes spares.
e-mail pbailey@melbpc.org.au
Peter Bailey

486 DX2/66, 8 Mb Ram, 200 HDD, 3.5 FDD, Mouse, Keyboard, SVGA Monitor, Windows 3.11
$175.00

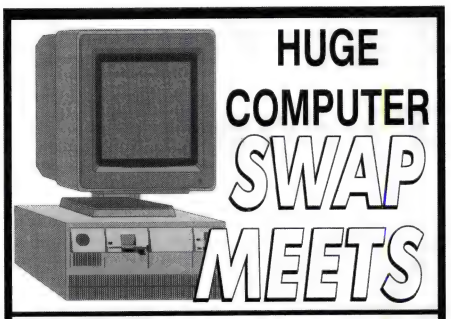
KTX 15" Monitor
$100.00

Lotus Smart Suite 97 CD & all documents in unopened pack
$35.00

Microsoft Money 98 – CD & manual in unopened pack
$25.00

Tracker for Windows v.2 – Disks and manuals in box
$30.00

John Ph: 9557 1535 or
jv@melbpc.org.au


HUGE COMPUTER SWAP MEETS

Sunday 21st November
The IVANHOE CENTRE
275 Upper Heidelberg Rd
THE CAMBERWELL CENTRE
340 Camberwell Road

Sunday 28th November
BOX HILL TOWN HALL
1022 Whitehorse Road
MOORABBIN TOWN HALL
985 NEPEAN HIGHWAY

Sunday 5th December
ROYAL MELBOURNE SHOWGROUNDS
Epsom Road, Ascot Vale
MALVERN TOWN HALL
Cnr High St. & Glenferrie Rd.

Sunday 12th December
COLLINGWOOD TOWN HALL
140 Hoddle Street
SPRINGVALE CITY HALL
397 Springvale Road

Sunday 19th December
IVANHOE TOWN HALL
275 Upper Heidelberg Road
THE CAMBERWELL CENTRE
340 Camberwell Road

Everyone welcome to Buy — Sell — Exchange
9 am to 4.30 pm, Entry $2.50, Stands from $6.00
For details phone (03) 9886 1466 (BH)

Cut Your Losses — Not Your Throat

Bob Muirhead

Suppose those shares you bought recently have started to fall. What do you do? Panic and sell, happy to get out with a few buttons even though you have lost your shirt? Hold on grimly, vowing to sell the moment they regain their former price? Or do you try to make a bargain with God, if only He will undo your error, just this once?

The most obvious principle of investing is probably: "preserve your capital" which leads to the corollary: "cut your losses." But this is commonly disregarded when investors worry about their declining shares.

Research shows that subjective, emotional and irrational factors frequently override logical analysis when we make significant buy and sell decisions. Individual attitudes to risk and security exert powerful influences on our investing decisions.

This is especially true for assets like shares that are easily bought and sold and which fluctuate daily in value. Sharemarket investors walk a tightrope between the powerful emotions of fear and greed that can strongly affect their ability to make and act on rational decisions.

Before buying a particular share, we can be objective and impartial about it because there is no emotional or financial commitment at risk. However, once the share is bought, things are very different indeed. Subsequent success or failure with the investment will exert a powerful influence over our decisions to hold or sell. Emotion and subjective factors will then play a much bigger role. We are all experts in the correct upbringing of other people's children, whereas emotion and family history play decisive roles in the upbringing of our own.

Subjective and even irrational behaviour is common when facing losses. The prospect of loss can be quite stressful and stress can distort judgment. People will often maintain, or even add to, a losing position when the logical response would be to quit it and invest the proceeds in something better. We rationalise that perhaps it will turn out well in the long term, or we hope for a bounce in order to sell closer to the purchase price. Problem gambling is probably the classic illustration of this type of irrational behaviour.

But we need not always be the pawns of our psychological drives. We can change our investing behaviour to some extent if we know our subjective responses to gains and losses.

One good way to get a fix on your own subjective responses is to list all your own share buying and selling decisions.

Look at the failures. Try to get a feel for why each investment failed and why the losses got as large as they did. Be objective in identifying any subjective factors involved. Your partner can be a ruthless aid in this soul-searching!

Then do the same for profitable shares that have been sold, focusing on those where you sold too early and missed out on later profits. Many investors will find that profitable decisions have generally been more objectively arrived at than losing decisions.

I do this analysis at the end of each year, using trading reports generated by Quicken. Knowing my own behavioural traits does not always prevent them from recurring, but at least I have a heightened sensitivity to the most common error: waiting too long to cut losses.

To help overcome my aversion to crystallising losses, I write a clear goal statement in Quicken for each share bought. I use the Memo fields in my Share account register for this purpose. Then I force myself to sell if my initial assumptions prove wrong. At least I try to!

If I think a float might do well on listing, but will probably weaken later, my goal statement might be: "buy into the float and sell on the day of listing regardless of price." If I buy a resources share on the basis of certain reserves and outlook for development, my goal statement might be: "sell if there is a significant downgrade in reserves or development timetable." The more precise the goal the better.

I find clear goals better than setting quantitative "stop loss" prices for selling, but I often use "stop loss" prices as triggers to investigate if the price is falling because my buying assumptions are failing. This approach frees me from the irksome discipline of rigidly acting on "stop loss" prices and also provides a convenient excuse for failing to sell when I should have.

Good goal-setting requires detailed knowledge of market conditions and of the company as well as close monitoring of its activities. Otherwise the goals are likely to be inappropriate or you will miss seeing when your assumptions have materially changed.

All this soul-searching and analysis might sound like a lot of work, but it is worth it if your new insights reduce your losses over the years. The most successful investors say that a major factor in their success is being ruthlessly disciplined in exiting losing positions. That's why they wear silk shirts from Calvin Klein and don't have to make bargains with God. □

Internet Access Application Form

Instructions

- Please **read** the entire form. It may be photocopied.
- Complete **every** field else it might be returned to you. Each field has a purpose, which includes updating our database.
- Enclose a cheque or authorise a charge against your credit card for the requisite amount. Send the form with payment to
  Melbourne PC User Group
  PO Box 283
  South Melbourne VIC 3205

Description of Service

- **General.** The Melbourne PC User Group Inc A0003293V (Melb PC) Internet Service network (the Network) is a private telecommunications network owned and operated by Melb PC for its members. It is administered by the Internet Subcommittee (the Subcommittee) as a subscriber-funded service.
- **Function of the Melb PC Network.** The primary function of the Network is to support the free transfer of information to and from Melb PC members, subject to the terms of our Acceptable Use Policy.
- **Standard Service.** PPP accounts.
- **Features:**
  - Electronic Mail.
  - We also provide access to other services that are found on the Internet but they are not under our control.
- **Charges.** Annual fee $140, subject to change from time to time.
- **Limits and Quotas.** Up to 120 minutes access per day (non-cumulative). A bank of modems is made available with a time limit of 30 minutes for the benefit of users who need to check their mail and get off quickly. The Mail quota is 4 MB. Excess mail may be deleted.
- **Access Software.** You will need to acquire and configure suitable software from our Shareware library or other resources.
- **Accounts.** Accounts are issued only to individuals, not company names. Melb PC may reject an application without stating a reason.
- **Support.** Volunteers offer their help in local newsgroups, via our free Bulletin Board Service, or by telephone.
- **Training.** Melb PC offers training courses.
- **Duration.** The subscription to the Network is for one year from the date of acceptance. It automatically terminates upon expiry of membership of Melb PC.
- Acknowledgment. Successful applicants will include individuals whose forms are correctly filled out and whose funds have been transferred to our bank account.

Net Etiquette. Melb PC endorses adherence to ("*net etiquette*" or "*netiquette*") as deemed by the subcommittee from time to time.

Internet Access Agreement

Definitions

"**Melb PC**" means The Melbourne PC User Group Incorporated A0003293V or its assignee;

"**the subscriber**" means the Melb PC member making this application;

"**family subscriber**" refers to an existing Melb PC Family Member, or a member of the family residing at the same address who applies for Melb PC Family Membership at this same time, paying the additional $10 Melb PC membership in addition to the Internet subscription;

"**Internet access**" means access to the World Wide Web, Internet e-mail and any additional Internet facilities Melb PC may offer to its members from time to time, but unless Melb PC agrees otherwise does not include supply or maintenance of the subscriber's equipment, software or telephone line, or technical support;

"**subscription period**" means the period in advance for which the subscriber has paid in full, being one of the periods of subscription offered by Melb PC from time to time;

1. The subscriber asks Melb PC to provide Internet access and Melb PC agrees to do so.
2. This agreement starts when an authorised officer of Melb PC has executed it and Melb PC has received cleared payment for the subscription period.
3. Subject to the early termination clauses of this agreement and to clause 4, this agreement continues until the end of the subscription period.
4. If Melb PC and the subscriber renew this agreement for a further subscription period, this agreement applies to the renewed subscription period unless the parties agree otherwise in writing.
5. The subscriber acknowledges that:

   a. Continuity and speed of the Internet access depends on a wide range of factors, many of which are beyond the control of Melb PC;
   b. Melb PC has no control over the accuracy or appropriateness of any information on the Internet;
   c. Melb PC is not responsible for any material available on the Internet;
   d. The subscriber's Internet access may be interrupted by equipment failure, the need for routine maintenance, peak demand and so on;
   e. Melb PC cannot guarantee that the subscriber will be able to secure access at any given time, or that fluctuations in demand by other subscribers will not prevent the subscriber from using the full amount of the maximum daily time allowance on any given day.
6. Subject to matters of the kind referred to in the previous clause and to the subscriber's access limits, Melb PC will use its best endeavours to keep Internet access available continuously and to allow the subscriber to have access for the current daily time allowance from time to time.
7. The subscriber indemnifies Melb PC against any liability, claim, action, suit, demand, loss, cost or expense arising out of or in any way connected with this agreement or Internet access, including any negligence by Melb PC, its servants or agents.
8. The subscriber will pay fees according to Melb PC's standard pricing list from time to time, and a copy of the list certified by an officer of Melb PC is conclusive evidence of the prices applicable at any time.
9. Melb PC may make rules for the use by the subscriber of Internet access, including rules as to online time limits, transmission volume limits, excess usage fees, terms of payment and any other matter at all that Melb PC considers desirable, provided that there shall be no reduction in the access time of the subscriber during any period for which the subscriber has paid in advance unless the service provided by Melb PC has been or is to be enhanced so as to make up for any lost value. Melb PC may alter the rules on not less than fourteen days notice to the subscriber. A copy of the rules certified by an officer of Melb PC is conclusive evidence of the rules applicable at any time. The rules from time to time will apply as if they were set out in full as terms of this agreement.
10. The subscriber must not deliberately or recklessly do anything that damages Melb PC's equipment, software, setup or services.
11. The subscriber must not use Internet access to annoy, harass or harm other Internet users.
12. The subscriber must not use Internet access for any unlawful purpose or in any unlawful manner.
13. The subscriber will keep safe and confidential any access numbers, codes or passwords allotted to them by Melb PC and notify Melb PC without delay of any disclosure of those things.
14. Melb PC may terminate the subscriber's Internet access immediately if the subscriber breaches this agreement or the rules, or fails to promptly pay any money owed to Melb PC, or ceases to be a member of Melb PC.
15. Subject to the previous clause, either party may terminate this agreement by 14 days' notice to the other save that Melb PC must not terminate this agreement while the subscriber has credit for advance payment of fees without refunding a pro rata part of those fees or making alternative Internet access arrangements for the subscriber, and termination by the subscriber does not affect any debt owed to Melb PC at the time of termination.
16. Melb PC may delete without notice any material found on its storage disks that is unauthorised, unlawful, obscene, dangerous, excessive in volume, uncollected for an excessive period, or in an unauthorised place.

17. Melb PC may delete without notice any material found on its storage disks without giving any reason for doing so.

18. Melb PC may make and keep any record it requires for the purpose of this agreement or the rules or for the operation of its services.

19. The Description of Service, Internet Access Agreement, and the services as described on this application form constiture the entire agreement between the parties, and neither of them relies on any term, condition, warranty, collateral contract, representation or promise not set out in those parts of this application forms.

20. Any notice given about any matter concerning this agreement may be given by fax, e-mail or post at the last fax number, e-mail or postal address notified to the sender and is deemed to have been received at the time when it would have arrived in the ordinary course of the relevant type of transmission.

21. The subscriber must not transfer, sell or share Internet access rights, or allow the account to be used by any other person, other than those Melb PC Family Members who are listed on this application.

22. The user's last name must be displayed in all mail and news messages. The user's first name or initials may be displayed as desired.

23. Commercial traffic, in the form of private messages and advertisements in newsgroups designated for that purpose, is permitted within the bounds of net etiquette.

24. The *Organization*: field in private electronic mail or public newsgroup article headers must always be *Melbourne PC User Group, Australia,* the name of the service provider. Any other organisation or business name is permitted only in the four-line (maximum) "signature" text that is optionally inserted at the end of the message or article.

25. Connection of any networking system or device that permits multiple users to share one account simultaneously is not permitted.

26. The *From:* field used in mail and news messages must be the Melb PC assigned user name, e.g. *jjones@melbpc.org.au* not the address where a reply is sought, e.g. *jjones@pobox.com.au*. Such an arrangement should be managed by use of the *Reply-To:* field.

27. Melb PC may assign its rights and obligations under this agreement to an Internet access provider that is of equal standard to Melb PC, and after notice of assignment is given to the subscriber, this agreement shall have operation as if it had been entered into between the assignee and the subscriber and Melb PC's rights (except for its right to recover any money owed to it immediately before the assignment) and obligations under this agreement shall be at an end.

28. The parties submit to the law of Victoria, Australia in relation to any the interpretation of this agreement, or any dispute arising out of it.

Service Required and Payment

Subscription	$ 140.00
Melb PC Internet Kit software Windows 3.x version @ $10.00	$.....
Melb PC Win 95/98/NT setup @ $5.00	$.....
Total	$.....

Tick ☑

☐ Cheque for above total is enclosed.

or

☐ Debit my card with $.....

☐ Bankcard / ☐ MasterCard / ☐ Visa

Expires: ...../.....

Number:

____ ____ ____ ____

Name on Card .....

Signature: .....

Applicant Details

First Name: .....

Last Name: .....

Membership Number: .....

Postal Address: .....

.....

Postcode: .....

Telephone

Day (.....) .....

Evening (.....) .....

Job Title: .....

Employer: .....

Tick ☑

My age is: ☐ 18 or above, ☐ Below 18

I hereby apply for the Internet Service described on this and the previous page

Signature: .....

Additional Family Members who will share the one account/user name:

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Name: .....

Signature: .....

Applicant(s) to Complete (CAPITALS, please)

Parent/Guardian to Complete

(If any of the applicants is below the age of 18) I am the parent/guardian of the applicant. I am aware of the nature of information available through the Internet and support this application.

Name .....

Telephone

(day) (.....) .....

Signature: .....

User Name

List below the user ("login") names you would like, in order of preference, up to eight lowercase characters and/or numerals. Write very clearly, to avoid our confusing certain letters. User names are expressed in lowercase letters and numbers and must represent your real name in some recognisable way, e.g. John J. Jones might request user names such as john, johnj, jjones, etc. Any user name that is already allocated or deemed unsuitable in the opinion of the system administrators will not be allocated. Preferred full name (e.g. *John J Jones* or *Jones Family*), to be recorded on the system.

.....

Previous name (if to be changed):

Choice 1

Choice 2

Choice 3

Choice 4

Choice 5

Office Use Only

✓ Tick as applicable

☐ Form and fee correct

☐ Parent of under age applicant contacted (date) ...../...../199

☐ Membership database checked and updated

☐ Incomplete form returned to sender (date) ...../...../199

☐ Acknowledgment returned to sender (date) ...../...../199

Initials of office staff .....

Annual General Meeting

David Owen, Returning Officer

The Annual General Meeting and the election of the committee shall be held on Wednesday 1 December 1999 at the Pharmacy College, 381 Royal Parade, Parkville at 6.30 pm.

You may vote by completing the postal ballot and posting or delivering it to the returning officer or by giving your proxy to another member who can attend the AGM or by personally attending the AGM yourself.

Postal ballot papers and proxies cannot be submitted by fax, e-mail or via the BBS.

Postal Voting Procedure

- Use the postal ballot paper on page 26 or a photocopy of it;
- Mark your selections;
- voting is "first past the post";
- Place the ballot paper in a sealed envelope, print your name and membership number on the outside of this envelope and sign it;
- Put this envelope in another envelope addressed to:

  David Owen — Returning Officer
  Frederick Owen & Associates Pty Ltd
  55-57 Cardigan Place
  Albert Park VIC 3206

- Mail or deliver to arrive by 12 noon on Monday 29 November 1999.

Proxy Voting

If you cannot attend the AGM you may appoint another member as your proxy by completing a proxy form and posting it or delivering it to the Secretary by the start of the AGM. The form of proxy can be found at *www.melbpc.org.au/melbpc/rules/app1.htm* or you may collect one from the Melb PC Office. Your proxy will have to attend the AGM and will be given a ballot paper to complete at the meeting.

If you submit a postal ballot paper and a proxy then your proxy holder will not be given a ballot paper at the AGM.

To avoid overloading the election officials on the night of the AGM please endeavour to deliver proxies to the office as early as possible.

Elections

Elections will only be held for the position of Vice President and for the eight members of the Committee. There was only one nomination for the positions of President, Secretary and Treasurer and those nominees shall be declared elected at the AGM.

The following nominations and [unedited] candidate statements have been received:

Candidate for President

(1 position)

Morris Tobias

Address: 6 Los Angeles Court Ripponlea.
Proposed by: John Swale
Seconded by: Bill Ford

Being Vice-President of Melb PC several times, and for the last 10 months being President, has given me an insight to the inner workings of a truly great organisation. With the right guidance the Group has a great future ahead of it. Melb PC is a multi-million dollar enterprise which needs sound business expertise to ensure it's survival. On that, I stand on my record.

Our survival, however cannot be measured by finances alone. I will continue to encourage our members to get involved in Group activities wherever possible, and ensure that our ethos of users helping users is successful

Candidates for Vice-President

In alphabetical order

(1 position)

Dave Botherway

Address: 18 Barossa Avenue, Vermont South
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: George Skarbek

Prior to joining Melb PC Committee last year, Dave served for 14 years as a Director of ASG (the IBM Large Systems User Group), rising to Vice President of their International User Group Council. In his daytime job, he manages an Electronic Trading facility. He thus brings considerable skills to the Melb PC committee. He has been active with East SIG for three years, and is a regular presenter to many SIGs. His vision is that Club benefits need to be available to ALL members. Accordingly, he actively pursues ways to enhance the value of being a Melb PC member.

Thomas Lyons

Address: 9/342 Dandenong Rd., East St. Kilda.
Proposed by: Bill Ford
Seconded by: Robert Mead

Last year when I first stood for Committee, I had a Ten Point plan to modernize the club and to start to bring us back to the core Values the club was founded upon. Some of those goals have been achieved but there is more work to be done with your help. We need to rewrite some of our rules to restore our core values and to focus the club back on the members, add the latest equipment to the computer poor SIG rooms and start more special interest groups. Your vote will help! For further information please see http://mercury.spaceports.com~election/index.htm

Candidate for Secretary

(1 position)

John Swale

Address: 9 Larbert Avenue, North Balwyn.
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: Bill Ford

As a founding member I have seen Melb PC grow from a small group, to a significant small business. I have tried to repay the help I received over those years by serving as Treasurer in the early days, and over the last 10 years by writing Random Access in PC Update. This effort has been recognized with Life membership. As Secretary I have improved processes while working to increase membership and the services we offer.

I seek your support in keeping the "members helping members" process alive while adding the business controls necessary to keep it running smoothly.

Candidate for Treasurer

(1 position)

William Ford FCPA

Address: 51 Mary Street, Hawthorn.
Proposed by: George Skarbek
Seconded by: Thomas Lyons

As the only person with continuous involvement with the Committee during the last four years I am proud to be associated with the Group's achievements during that time. While the Group is a not-for-profit organisation, the large variety and diversity of its activities requires that it be managed in an

efficient and businesslike manner, which I believe it is, by its volunteer Committee. If reelected I will promote the development of forward-looking mission and vision statements, supported by a comprehensive business plan that address the diverse future needs of the Group.

Candidates for Committee

In alphabetical order

(8 positions)

Ray Beatty

Address: 507/34 Queens Rd, Melbourne.
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: John Swale

Ray Beatty is well known to members as convener of the Monthly Meetings. Holding this job for several years, he has combined the selection of interesting products and speakers with prizes exceeding $500,000 — all with showmanship and flair.

By profession he is a marketer. This club needs to market its services widely, grow membership, increase activities on behalf of the members, and get them the most benefit out of what has become a valuable asset. Ray can bring his expertise to this role. Trained as a journalist he has spent over 30 years as a top-notch advertising man.

Keith Beresford

Address: 228 Manchester Rd., Mooroolbark.
Proposed by: Dave Botherway
Seconded by: Frank Maher

With my member number down in the low 8000's I have been around awhile. Currently the East SIG Co-ordinator. What can I bring to MPC? As a previous committee member I understand many of the issues at hand, and with my marketing experiences gain over the last 4 years I look forward to adding positive idea's to help keep this group the envy of many others world wide.

Dave Botherway

Address: 18 Barossa Avenue, Vermont South
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: George Skarbek

(see statement above)

Diane J. Cummings

Address: 22 Pyalong Avenue, Rosanna.
Proposed by: D.A. Brooke
Seconded by: F.V. Gilbert

Married, with three daughters, they and computers have dominated my life since the early 1980s. I understand basic programming, always use Excel and Publisher to write a monthly Club newsletter and organise Trade Fairs. Good manners, honesty and loyalty mean a great deal to me. I intend taking an independant stance on any subject put forward at committee meetings, always taking into account the common sense point of view. If you vote 'because she's a woman and we need women on the committee', I don't really mind, but I'd rather you voted for new ideas and keen involvement. Thanks.

William Ford

Address: 51 Mary Street, Hawthorn.
Proposed by: George Skarbek
Seconded by: Thomas Lyons
(see statement above)

David L. Graham

Address: 13 Miller Street, Melbourne
Proposed by: James W. McNabb
Seconded by: Thomas Lyons
(No statement Supplied)

Brian K. Horman

Address: 5/9 Cheltenham Road, Black Rock.
Proposed by: R.B. Martin
Seconded by: Morris Tobias
(No statement Supplied)

Colin Lumsden

Address: 126 Finlayson Street, Rosanna
Proposed by: Brian Taylor
Seconded by: Thomas Lyons

A member for over 10 years. Occupied management positions all working life. Had own computer business 1990–1999 now retiring. Past committee/treasurer of LandRover Owners Club. Past committee/director of Port Melbourne Football Club. OPEN MANAGEMENT STYLE. Genuinely seek member input for the club. Inform members of relevant decisions. Complete disclosure of all details on regular basis. Should club be Victorian PC Users? Justify club assets, income and expenditure. Appropriate financial budgeting for planning club advancement.

Thomas Lyons

Address: 9/342 Dandenong Rd, East St. Kilda.
Proposed by: Bill Ford
Seconded by: Robert Mead

(see statement above)

Barry Martin

Address: 12 Devon Drive, Blackburn.
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: R. Mayston

I have been a member of Melb PC since 1993, and I was invited to join the Committee in September 1997. I am a system consultant and have worked in information technology since 1974.

As personal computers become more powerful, operating systems and applications more complex, Melbourne PC has an increasingly important role in providing services and support to PC Users. The continuation and expansion of appropriate SIGs and services such as Internet, BBS and telephone assistance is my mission critical. This will maintain the relevance of the Group, and enhance its attractiveness and marketability to new members.

R. Mayston

Address: 30 Strathmore Street, Bentleigh.
Proposed by: Bruce A. Lewis
Seconded by: Morris Tobias

(No statement Supplied)

Robert Mead

Address: 2 Pengelly Court, Sunshine.
Proposed by: Mark Trickett
Seconded by: Thomas Lyons

Members
Question. Why am I an average member standing for the Committee?
The answer is, My name is Robert Mead from Sunshine and I have been a working volunteer member for the group, in the office – swap meets – monthly meetings – Sig convenor and I feel I have the capability to take it one step further to the committee. The group needs fresh people that work for the whole group and not themselves on the committee and a committee that look after all members and not a preferred few members. A voluntary organisation must be efficient for all.

John P. Morris

Address: 12 Rimmer Street, Mentone.
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: Dave Botherway

It has been my privilege to serve the Committee previously, and many will know of my continuing work with the Internet team.

In the past I have coordinated the Swap Meet presentations and worked on several other activities for Melb PC. However due to the

actions of a few other disruptive members who delight in their constant unconstructive actions and the spreading of misinformation, I reluctantly withdrew from these activities.

I seek now to rejoin the committee and add my knowledge and give support to combat these disruptive elements so that Melb PC can again be recognised in its true light.

D.I.McKenzie

Address: 102/431 St. Kilda Road, Melbourne.
Proposed by: Brian Taylor
Seconded by: Thomas Lyons

I am to standing to ensure ordinary members have a say in running the club again and shall implement the following.

The President's business, SHOULD NOT be able to sell Hardware/Software ($20,629) to the club, nor shall any other Committee member. Free Basic Windows 95/98 training. Internet $100 yearly, $11 monthly Direct Debit. Email only $25 yearly. Publish monthly committee minutes & financial data. Return to core values with Greater committee accountability to membership. Office open longer for member convenience. No wasteful overseas trips. Rebuild what WAS a prize winning magazine.

Ash Nallawalla

Address: Burke Street, Werribee.
Proposed by: Gary Taig
Seconded by: Bob Burt

A $1M organisation and an award-winning magazine are no accident. We need businesslike managers, not technicians. Give Morris your proxy to ensure sound management. Life Member, Managing Editor, Webmaster, Vice-President and other Melb PC titles since 1988. Members benefit through the links I have established with other groups and vendors and the group's Internet Service, which I started. I have helped create user group newsgroups and mailing lists on the Internet. On average I spend five hours daily for the group using electronic media. URL: http://easyrsvp.com/ash

Noel William Peters

Address: 19 Purtell Street, Bentleigh East.
Proposed by: Ash Nallawalla
Seconded by: Morris Tobias

I am interested to see our Group continue to develop and offer a solid range of services to its membership.

As many of you will know I have been with Melb PC for many years, I participate as a volunteer in the Group's office every Wednesday and have been so doing for at least five years or more, I actively support the Retired and Interested Persons SIG, make presentations on occasion on computing subjects

I am convener of RIPSIG's hardware subgroup where we assist with maintenance and repair of our SIG member's computers. I encourage your support.

George Skarbek

Address: 2 Tiuna Court, Glen Waverley.
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: John Swale

Having enjoyed being a member of Melb PC virtually since inception I would like continue to contribute by standing again for committee. Working with the energetic and coherent team will permit the group to grow further with financial and management stability. As the manager of our Internet service I intent to improve it further while keeping the costs fixed or be able to lower them. Running my computer consulting company allows me to know the problems experienced by users while writing for The Age will allow me to publicise the Group's activities to boost membership.

John Swale

Address: 9 Larbert Avenue, North Balwyn.
Proposed by: Morris Tobias
Seconded by: Bill Ford
(see statement above)

Morris Tobias

Address: 6 Los Angeles Court Ripponlea.
Proposed by: John Swale
Seconded by: Bill Ford
(see statement above)

Mark Trickett

Address: RSD 1143 Smoko via Bright
Proposed by: Felix Hofmann
Seconded by: D.A. Brooke

I have been a member of the Melbourne PC User Group for nearly a decade. During that time, I have benefited from being involved in the activities of the group. I have also tried, with varying degrees of success, to put something back into Melb PC. I am standing for a position on the committee to endeavour to push for changes that I believe will improve the club for all members. ❑

1998 AGM Minutes

John Swale, Secretary

Minutes of 15th Annual General Meeting of Melbourne PC User Group Incorporated, held on Wednesday 2 December 1998 at 6.35 pm at Pharmacy College, 381 Royal Parade, Parkville.

1. Minutes

Motion: "That the minutes of the 14th Annual General Meeting as published in the December 1998 edition of PC Update be accepted as a true and correct record."
Moved: *R Mead*
Seconded: *P Smith*
Carried

Motion: "That the minutes of the 14th Annual General Meeting as published be approved as a true and correct record."
Moved: *R Howells*
Seconded: *R Beattie*
Carried

2. President's Report

Motion: "That the President's Report as published in the December 1998 edition of PC Update be accepted as the President's Report."
Moved: *P Smith*
Seconded: *D Botherway*
Carried

Motion: "That the President's Report as published be received."
Moved: *B Horman*
Seconded: *M Tobias*
Carried

3. Accounts

Motion: "That the Treasurer's Report as published in the November 1998 edition of PC Update be accepted as a record of the Income and Expenditure of the Group for the year to 30th June 1998 and the assets and liabilities of the Group at 30th June 1998."
Moved: *B Martin*
Seconded: *J Morris*
Carried

Motion: "That the statement pursuant to section 30(3) of the Associations Incorporation Act 1981 containing the Income and Expenditure of the Group for the year to 30th June 1998 and the assets and liabilities of the Group at 30th June 1998 be accepted."
Moved: *M Tobias*
Seconded: *R Mason*
Carried

4. Appointment of Auditor

Motion: "That Peter G. Salter, Registered Company Auditor (the Group's current Auditor) be reappointed to the position."
Moved: *W Ford*
Seconded: *B Martin*
Carried

5. Election of Committee of Management

As there were insufficient nominations to require an election the Returning Officer, Mr P. Bryce, declared the following positions filled:

Executive positions

President *Stan Johnstone*
Vice-President *Morris Tobias*
Treasurer *Bill Ford*
Secretary *John Swale*

Committee positions

(In alphabetical order.)
Carol Daniels
Joe Henry
Brian Horman
Barry Martin
Ash Nallawalla
George Skarbek

Nominations for the two vacancies were received from (alphabetically)
D Botherway, T Lyons, R Mead

The Returning Officer declared that, as there were two vacancies and three nominations, the meeting would need to be adjourned to the February meeting. This was so eligibility could be checked and the ballot papers could be prepared after the positions on the ballot paper were drawn by lot.

Motion: "That the Returning Officer's recommendation that the AGM be adjourned and that the ballot for the remaining positions be held at the February meeting."
Moved: *M Boyd-Williams*
Seconded: *R Howells*
Carried

R. Mead announced from the floor that he would withdraw his nomination. The Returning Officer accepted this offer and declared D Botherway and T Lyons elected to the Committee vacancies. The Returning Officer declared that there was now no reason for adjourning the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6:58 pm. ❑

Melbourne PC User Group Incorporated

Postal Ballot Paper

Annual General Meeting

1 December 1999

Postal Ballots close at 12 noon on Monday 29 November 1999

Candidates for Vice President

Mark one box only to indicate the candidate of your choice

- ☐ **Dave Botherway**
- ☐ **Thom Lyons**

Candidates for Committee

Mark up to eight boxes to indicate the candidates of your choice

- ☐ **Brian Horman**
- ☐ **Dave Botherway**
- ☐ **David Graham**
- ☐ **Bob Mayston**
- ☐ **George Skarbek**
- ☐ **Thom Lyons**
- ☐ **Ray Beatty**
- ☐ **Keith Beresford**
- ☐ **Barry Martin**
- ☐ **Robert Mead**
- ☐ **Noel Peters**
- ☐ **Mark Trickett**
- ☐ **Don McKenzie**
- ☐ **Dianne Cummings**
- ☐ **Colin Lumsden**
- ☐ **John Morris**
- ☐ **Ash Nallawalla**

President's Annual Report

Morris Tobias

This time last year, I could not have imagined myself writing the President's Annual Report. When our previous president, Stan Johnstone had to make the choice between Melb PC and his health, it was with some trepidation that I took over the position. In my first column, I wrote that I had big boots to fill — few if anyone could begin to imagine just how big. Stan steered the group through some of its biggest challenges, and probably doesn't realise just how much appreciated his efforts were. On a sadder note, Stan had his critics. Most, if not all of this criticism was in the form of whispering campaigns and rumours. It is a testament to Stan's influence that 10 months after his departure, new rumours are surfacing and old ones are being re-hashed — in a twisted kind of way it's very complimentary!

Financial

The Financial Report for 1998-1999 appeared in the October edition of *PC Update*. A copy can be obtained from the office if you missed it. Bill Ford, our treasurer has again guided us through a highly successful year. We recorded a surplus of almost $207,000 and have reserves of over a million dollars. While this sounds a lot, we should bear in mind the experiences of the Boston Computer Society, once the largest PC User Group in the world. BCS folded within 12 months of being in a similar financial position to ours. We must continue with prudent financial management.

Internet

Our Internet service continues to grow, and despite a small hiccup in the last couple of months gives great value for money. During the past year the Internet team has experimented with extra benefits for subscribers such as the extra time allowances currently available. While we can't guarantee that this will be available on a permanent basis, new ways of giving benefits to subscribers are continually being investigated. Bandwidth from Connect.com.au has now been increased to give better download speeds following problems with our main bandwidth wholesaler, EISA.

No-one could deny that the three month wait for new lines was enough to test the patience of anyone trying to gain access to the service during peak times. This delay was completely beyond our control and we are liaising closely with Telstra, who have assured us that next time we order additional lines they should be installed much faster.

BBS

In Stan Johnstone's Annual Report for 1998 members were informed there had been little development of the BBS for the previous two years, and that changes recommended two years ago had not been implemented. No real progress has occurred since. This seems to confirm what most of us believe, that the older BBS technology is slowly being replaced with Internet and presents little incentive for our volunteers to get excited about changes and improvements. Perhaps this is one area of the group's services that needs to be reassessed.

Membership

Our total membership figure as at 30 June 1999 stood at 10,764, some 16 fewer than at 30 June 1998. Whilst we have been fairly stable for the last 3 years or so, our Membership subcommittee will continue to examine ways of increasing membership and giving existing members more reasons to renew.

PC Update

In the latter half of this year, we were disappointed to learn that production of our flagship magazine, *PC Update* could not continue as it had in the past. During the tender process we were open to ideas, envisaging a combined Editor, Production Manager and Advertising Agent who would be supplied with Melb PC related content and source sufficient articles to fill the magazine. Ziff Davis/ APN not only came up with a great deal, but as a bonus members were to receive *PC Magazine* free of charge. At the point of crossing the "T"s and dotting the "I"s, Ziff Davis management were told of an imminent take over and were not allowed to enter into any new contracts of this type. With hindsight, the announcement was made prematurely. Who could have foreseen the circumstances that ultimately led to the deal falling through at the finishing post? Ash Nallawalla had produced a newsletter in place of the September issue, and the outcry proved beyond question that *PC Update* is very important to our members. I should make it clear that this is in no way a criticism of Ash, who produced the best newsletter anyone could, in the short time available.

Once again we called for tenders, and Gary Taig a veteran volunteer production editor of *PC Update* volunteered yet again; this time to put together an interim magazine. Judging by the phone calls, e-mails and faxes this has met with nothing but approval. As I write this report we have made a shortlist from some outstanding applicants and will be making a decision very soon.

Training

Training continues to offer a wide range of courses. The PCs have now been upgraded, ready to take on ever more powerful operating systems and programs. Again, some courses were cancelled due to lack of numbers. We are always open to suggestions for anything that will add attraction to our training courses. or improve the services the training department offers to members, or simply, to improve attendances.

Shareware

David, Glenn, Ian and Yvonne Webster continue to seek out new software and upgrades to existing programs for the shareware library. Many people say that the Internet has done away with the need for a shareware library, but we should bear in mind that not everyone has, or wants, or is able to access the Internet. Many others are wary of downloading files that may be infected with a virus.

There are too many other areas and too little space in this edition to mention all in detail. My apologies to anyone I might have inadvertently missed.

Overall, we have had another successful year, and head towards 2000 in a strong financial position with an enviable team of volunteers and staff. ❑

GoBack 2.1

Bernadette Houghton

We've all done it. A moment of inattention, the wrong keystroke, and there goes that important document, disappearing into electronic limbo. Imagine, too, having your computer infected by a virus or making some change to your system and now it's locked up. Don't you just wish you could turn back time and start all over again? Well, with GoBack you can. Sceptical? So was I, but it really works.

When GoBack first landed on my desk, I installed it and returned to work on other things for a couple of days. Then, my 3 year old got into a file I had unwittingly left open, filled it full of gobbledy-gook and saved it all just for me! Time to see what GoBack could do. Within 5 minutes I had recovered my file and was waxing euphoric about GoBack! Still, recalling past disasters caused by my over-confidence with software (*PC Update*, May 1999), I did my best to reserve judgment for the time being.

GoBack allocates part of your hard disk to itself as a buffer – 10% by default, but you can customise this amount. As you use your computer, it keeps unobtrusive watch and records the details. If you strike problems and need to invoke GoBack, it uses your current hard disk image plus the information it has stored to recreate your files as they were at whatever past time you've nominated. More specifically, GoBack can:-

- create a virtual drive which mirrors your hard drive at a specific time in the past
- revert your entire hard drive to the way it was at a specific time in the past
- retrieve specific overwritten or deleted files.

The more hard disk space allocated to GoBack, the greater it's reach in time. Because it loads into memory even before the operating system starts up, it still functions if Windows crashes.

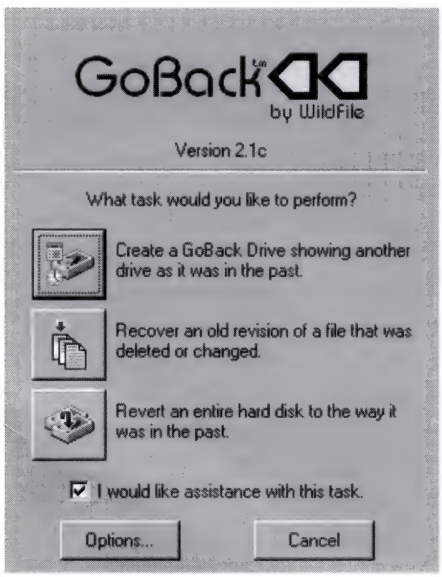


Figure 1. GoBack's menu.

If Disaster Strikes!

If something has gone wrong and your computer won't boot, its time to call upon GoBack. The GoBack boot screen, which appears briefly during startup and before Windows loads, offers access to GoBack's emergency functions. Among these functions is the option to revert your hard disk to an earlier time. GoBack suggests a suitable time, but you can choose an earlier or later time instead. If Windows doesn't start successfully, you continue to access the emergency revert function, choosing times further and further back. If all goes well, you'll eventually reach a point where Windows successfully starts. If you're still unable to start Windows at the earliest available time in GoBack's memory, you'll need to resort to your usual backup media.

Once you have Windows operational, you can access GoBack through Windows and use the detailed information screens to choose a better time to revert to if necessary. The Disk Revert window displays periods of inactivity and boot points while the GoBack Drive window displays a detailed view of computer "events" and safe points (Figure 2). Safe points are times in which your computer is idle for several seconds. From either the Disk Revert window or the Drive window, you can revert your hard disk to whatever time you have chosen. If you make a mistake, you need not worry as you can usually still revert forward again.

In the GoBack Drive window you can create a virtual drive in GoBack's buffer, which mirrors your hard disk at a specific time. You can then view the contents of the drive in Windows Explorer and either revert to that time, or copy selected files across to your actual drives.

If disaster has impacted on only a few known files, right click on each file name in Windows Explorer, then choose Show Revisions from the drop down menu to view and recover old versions of the file. Alternatively, you can use GoBack's File Recovery window to view a list of all recoverable files.

GoBack warns you if it considers you're taking a risky action, such as reverting too far back into the past or to a time which is not a "safe point" . If you're not sure what to do, you can invoke the Assistant to guide you through a process..

Normally, when you boot from a floppy GoBack doesn't activate, but if you still prefer to have GoBack's protection, you can choose the 'Boot from Floppy' option on GoBack's boot menu. A warning, though — whenever GoBack is disabled, its buffer empties and you lose the ability to revert.

My Own Experience

GoBack took over 420 MB of my 4.3 GB hard drive. After my initial euphori experience with recovering an over-written file, I started testing GoBack in earnest. From deleting and recovering single files, I progressed to deleting whole directories and finally gained the

confidence to delete most of the contents of my WINDOWS/SYSTEM directory. A successful recovery from that encouraged me to deliberately corrupt my FAT. Another successful recovery, and I went mad and deleted some partitions of my hard disk (including the partition containing the GoBack files and buffer). Each time, I successfully recovered.

GoBack's first chosen time didn't always repair my computer, but the second invariably did. Sometimes I reverted to a time prior to saving some important documents. However, I easily retrieved the latest version of my documents by creating a virtual drive for a time I knew the documents were safe then copying them from the virtual drive. The only time I noticed performance degradation on my computer was when Norton System Doctor warning messages popped up — they appeared more jerkily than usual.

While testing GoBack, I encountered a real-life, uncontrived, problem with my PC. Specifically, a DLL linked to Norton Utilities' Image became corrupted and made my PC unusable due to repeated error messages. It appeared that the corruption had evaded GoBack's watching eye, as despite reverting my PC back in time to some hours prior to the error occurring, the corrupt DLL continued to cause problems. I finally had to uninstall and re-install Norton Utilities.

During my test period, I did a lot of graphics work and my children spent some time playing a graphics-intensive game. I found GoBack's reach ranged from zero to 4 days. Zero recovery ability resulted not only when I temporarily disabled GoBack, but also when GoBack itself suspended logging "due to massive file activity". These suspensions occurred twice; once while my children were playing A Bug's Life and once while I was defragmenting my hard drive. Obviously, GoBack doesn't have the ability to discriminate between "important" and "unimportant" processing, but simply logs all activity!

The only other problem I encountered with GoBack was occasional "Cannot write to Drive D:" messages while installing and using Norton Utilities. Since I had over 700 MB of free space on that drive, I presume Norton was attempting to write in GoBack's buffer on the drive. The error messages didn't recur when I temporarily disabled GoBack, but I did then lose my ability to revert my PC beyond this time.

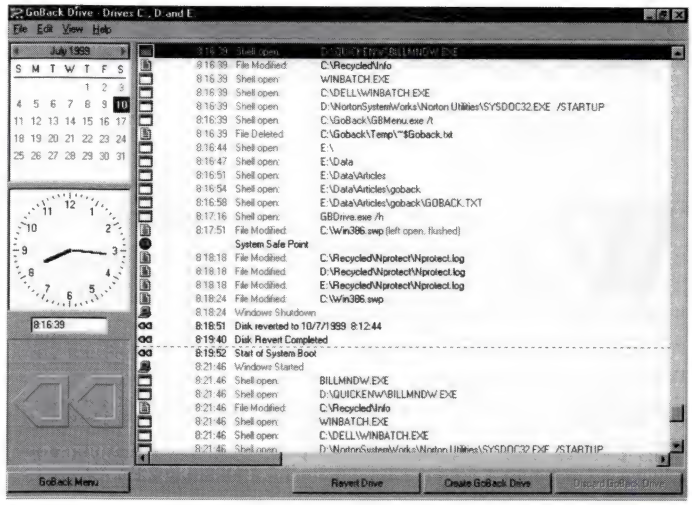


Figure 2. Creating a GoBack virtual drive.

When GoBack Doesn't Help

GoBack doesn't replace a traditional backup procedure, but it does help you to recover data in the time since your last backup, as long as that time is still within its reach. GoBack's reach depends not just upon how much space you have allocated to it but also how hard your computer has been working. Disk-intensive work such as graphics and large databases use up GoBack's buffer more quickly than word processing or spreadsheets. If you don't run graphics or play games, you'll find that GoBack's reach goes back much further. You can check this via GoBack's calendar and back up any potentially desirable files if necessary.

GoBack can't help if you exit an unsaved file. Nor will it help if your hardware breaks down; however, it should assist in data recovery once any hardware problems are corrected. As I write this review, GoBack works only on Windows 95 or Windows 98. It doesn't support multiple operating systems, hard drives which rely on disk manager software (e.g. Ontrack), compressed drives or networks. A network version should be available soon, however. You'll have to temporarily disable GoBack if you're altering your partition table, changing operating systems, installing an additional hard drive or using the emergency boot disks provided with various utilities. According to GoBack's documentation, older computers may experience performance degradation when running multimedia applications, and in such cases it recommends you temporarily disable GoBack.

GoBack needs a buffer of around 5 seconds to distinguish between two events. For instance, if you save a file then quickly make a change and save it again, GoBack may not detect the first save and thence may be unable to recover to that point. GoBack's documentation states that the chances of this happening are quite rare. Still, it is a possible explanation for why GoBack didn't notice the silent corruption of my Norton Utilities' Image DLL (ref. My Own Experience above).

Assessment

Every now and then I come across a product that impresses my socks off. GoBack is one. It's easy to use, and you don't have to have the foggiest idea what has gone wrong to be able to fix your problem. Since it requires no technical knowledge, it's ideal for beginners as well as more advanced users. Based on my experience, GoBack won't work unconditionally in all circumstances but it will greatly enhance your chances of recovering from a disaster. I love it! And it's staying on my computer!

Cost and Availability

US$69.95. For further information and online resellers, visit *www.goback.com.*

Minimum System Requirements

486 processor, Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, CD-ROM drive, 256-colour VGA adapter. GoBack uses about 10% of your hard disk space. ❑

Aztech AMS 5.1 Speaker System

by Ash Nallawalla

When I agreed to do a review of the Aztech AMS 5.1 multi-channel speakers, I had probably thought, "Oh, what can be so special about a pair of speakers?" When I saw the packaging, I was flabbergasted; more so when I tried to lift the box, which is about as heavy as a PC.

Yes, the AMS 5.1 Speaker System (AMS5.1) is a high-end speaker system consisting of:

- One 23-watt, four-ohm, 5.25-inch powered subwoofer
- Five seven-watt, four-ohm, 3-inch compact satellite speakers with three 3-metre speaker cables and two 6-metre speaker cables
- One Digital Control Unit with a two-metre interface cable
- One Infrared Remote Controller

These days, PCs are used for multimedia applications, games, DVD and other software that demands a high quality sound card and speakers to suit. The AMS5.1 squarely addresses this need, and how.

Your Home Theatre

I use Altec-Lansing speakers at work on my Dell PC but other than the brand name, they are nothing to write home about. At home I have had tinny little unpowered speakers that came with a sound card or bought at the Reject Shop for $4. My children have spoken of a friend who has "surround sound" for his gaming PC. Not having seen it, I dismissed the concept as something that is OK for other people or too difficult to duplicate. You know what is coming, right?

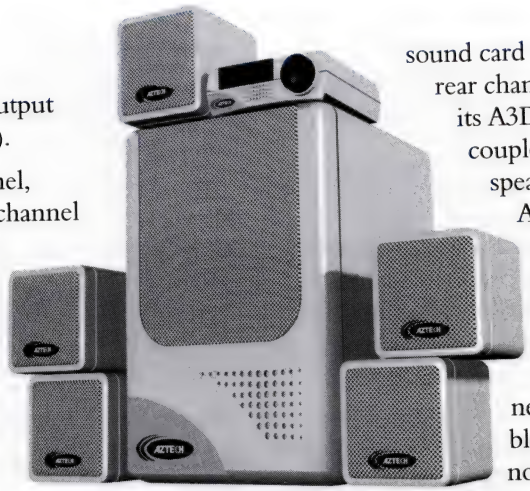
Yes, installing the AMS 5.1 for the sake of the review was as simple as plugging the subwoofer into my year-old single-output sound card and the mains power, plugging the satellite speakers into the subwoofer, and gently turning up the volume. For a permanent installation, one would mount the speakers on a wall behind the user and on the desk or wall behind the monitor.

Features

- 700 W PMPO Output Power (58 W RMS).
- Supports 2-channel, 4-channel and 5.1-channel analogue inputs.
- Outputs discrete 2-/4-/5.1-channel audio output with any 2-/4-/5.1-channel input sources.
- Outputs 2-/4-channel 3D positional audio effects with any 3D interactive sound modules.
- AMS Movie Surround Processing for 2-to-5.1 channel surround sound output.
- AMS Simulated Centre Processing for 4-to-5.1 channel surround sound output.
- Preset Environmental Effects such as Jazz, Game and Rock.
- Memory storage for user-defined settings.
- Independent programmable volume and mute control for individual channels: Subwoofer, Centre, Front Left, Front Right, Rear Left and Rear Right.
- Magnetically shielded speakers.
- Digital Control Unit.
- IR Remote Controller.
- Well-suited for 3D interactive sound cards such as Aztech PCI 368DSP, Aztech PCI 288-Q3DII, Creative Sound Blaster Live and Diamond MX300.
- Also suitable for AV equipment such as DVD/LD/VCD players, hi-fi gear and portable audio output devices.
- Headphone output
- Brackets, rubber feet and screws for satellite speakers

In Use

As expected, installation was simple, as there is no software to load on the PC. The effect of surround-sound is very impressive, particularly in a game that is optimised for 3D sound. I don't have a sound card with a separate rear channel output, but its A3D chip when coupled with the rear speakers of the AMS5.1 was effective enough for me. I am sure I could wake up the neighbours at full blast, but I did not attempt that.



The control unit has a large knob that you turn through several rotations to increase or decrease the volume. This can also be done with the remote controller. You can also adjust (or mute) any of the six speakers individually by holding down the specific button (as you would the Ctrl key on your PC) while adjusting the volume.

There are seven preprogrammed environmental settings:

- Rock
- Pop
- Jazz
- Default
- Night
- Game
- Cinema

You can also store seven of your own settings in the keys marked 1 through 7. Clearly, the speaker system is very flexible and satisfying. It would make a fine Christmas gift for yourself (or, in the season of giving, for your family).

Availability

The AMS 5.1 Speaker System retails for $200, which is cheaper than its US RRP of US$199. To locate your nearest reseller, contact either of the two Aztech distributors below.

Achieva Technology (02) 9742 3288
NatComp Technology (02) 9712 0099

Aztech RIVA TNT2 32T

Ash Nallawalla

Most PCs are sold with low-to-acceptable quality components and graphics cards are a common target for this economy. In due course you become aware of these things and buy high quality replacements.

Aztech has released the Riva TNT2 32T, a very fast graphics accelerator card, which will satisfy gamers and users of high-speed or high-resolution applications. The Riva TNT2 chip is supplied by Nvidia, which claims to make the world's fastest 128-bit 3D graphics chips. Its 4X AGP capability supports data transfer at up to 900 MB per second.

AGP stands for "advanced graphics port", which refers to the bus connection to the PC's motherboard. Your PC's memory is allocated for storing graphics textures. In practical terms you should know that an AGP card's pinouts are different from your usual plug-in card. If your graphics card slot has a brownish colour, then this is probably the AGP slot, but always check your manual.

The Riva TNT2 delivers 2 pixels per clock cycle and single-pass multi-texturing. The 32 MB frame buffer, 32-bit color pipeline, and 32-bit Z/stencil buffer deliver high quality and performance. In addition to VGA, another model in the range offers digital flat panel support, whereas the one I tested supported TV output in composite and S-video formats.

Features

- nVIDIA Riva 128-bit TwiN-Texel (TNT) architecture
- 4X/2X/1X AGP interface with full sideband support
- Data transfer at up to 900 MB per second
- Triple 8-bit 300 MHz palette RAMDAC
- TV output (NTSC/PAL)
- Resolution of up to 2048 x 1536 pixels at 60 Hz
- True colour rendering
- 32 MB SDRAM

Games

Nvidia recommends third-party games that exploit its chips. I have not tried them, but they include:

- Re-Volt, by Acclaim
- HomeworId, by Sierra/Relic
- Drakan, by Psygnosis/Surreal
- Expendable, by Rage

There is more jargon describing the 32T at the Aztech Web site *www.aztech.com.sg*, which will interest graphics buffs. In simple words, the card is well suited for 3D games and full-screen, 30 fps DVD playback.

In Use

Installation was easy — remove the old card and slot in the new one. When I restarted the PC, the new hardware was detected and I loaded the drivers from the supplied CD-ROM. The immediate difference was a vast increase in speed. If you did not know this, a graphics card with more than the default 4 MB RAM makes a noticeable difference. I went from 4 MB to 32 MB and it was like I had upgraded my CPU by 100 MHz.

Not only do games run fast, but every program that uses the screen runs fast. In reality, your CPU isn't running any faster; you have just enabled graphics data to reach the screen a lot faster. All in all, the Aztech RIVA TNT2 32T is a very worthwhile upgrade!

Requirements

Your PC should be running at least Microsoft Windows 95 OSR 2.0 and DirectX 6.0 or later. Windows NT 4.0 SP3 is also acceptable. A CD-ROM is required for installation of the drivers. An AGP card slot is also needed.

Availability

The Aztech RIVA TNT2 32T sells for $282. To locate your nearest reseller, contact either of the two Aztech distributors below:

- Achieva Technology (02) 9742 3288
- NatComp Technology (02) 9712 0099

Members Free Ads

WANTED: Your old computers when you upgrade!
Capable of running Win95 and '98 please. Nominal sum could be paid.

It's for a very good cause - the University of the Third Age.

Contact: Ruth Dassenaike
Phone: 9808 6715.

Various MCSE Training Guides — Microsoft Approved guides published by New Riders & Sybex with (unopened) CD-Roms.

As new hardbacks — prices vary. Also, other books on NT, Win 95.

John, Ph:9557 1535 or jv@melbpc.org.au

McAfee Office 2000

Bernadette Houghton

McAfee Office is a huge armload of a box, so large that I experienced an illogical feeling of disappointment on opening it to find only a single CD and a 250 page manual. When I last reviewed Office in February 1999, I found it a juicy collection of utilities, most of which do a reasonable job. This time around, several of the old standbys have been upgraded, and McAfee has trimmed the suite a little by dropping Hurricane and Guard Dog. McAfee has also cleaned up much of the rampant file duplication, substantially reducing the amount of disk space required by the full package.

Bringing together all the elements of the suite is Office Central, which acts as a command centre (a.k.a. menu) for each application. In this review, I offer a brief summary of those applications that have already featured in earlier issues of *PC Update*, with a more indepth look at the upgraded applications.

First Aid 2000

First Aid 2000 checks PC hardware and software for a range of problems, including outdated drivers, hardware and software conflicts, and configuration errors (Figure 1). Wherever possible, First Aid repairs problems, but if it can't, it tells you how to do so yourself. If the problem continues, First Aid's Advisor asks you a series of questions and offers possible solutions based on your answers. If Advisor fails to help, First Aid refers you to its Tech Support Yellow Pages which lists the contact details of various support services.

A new and improved interface is the most obvious change in First Aid 2000, with all functions accessible from the main screen. Like most of the other Office programs, First Aid includes a range of smaller utilities. Among others, you'll find a hardware Year 2000 checker, junk file cleaner and various system tools (defragger, scandisk and emergency disk utility). Also new in First Aid 2000 is the Event Monitor which monitors changes to your PC's configuration and to specified documents, enabling you to revert to earlier versions if things go wrong.

The great thing about First Aid is that it always offers an alternative if one option doesn't work. Its knowledge base is quite comprehensive, and while it won't answer every question you may have, it will point you in the right direction for further advice. An annoying feature is that many Advisor screens lack a Back button so navigation is often awkward. The Tech Support Yellow Pages has a North American slant, with mainly USA addresses and telephone numbers; happily, however, URLs are included too.

Nuts & Bolts 98

Nuts & Bolts is a fat collection of diagnostic and repair utilities (Figure 2). You'll find a defragger, an enhanced version of scandisk and a TrashGuard which dumps all deleted files (even those you delete in DOS) into your Recycle Bin. There is a document shredder, a zip file manager, a Registry Wizard, a Launch Rocket to speed up application launch times and lots more. I particularly like Retake which makes automatic backups of your documents as you work. Not all the utilities have a serious purpose; you'll also find an icon animator which spins, twirls and otherwise animates the icons on your desktop, and a utility to colour windows in pretty patterns.

VirusScan 4.0

VirusScan is a virus detection and cleansing program which runs on demand or in the background. It checks your e-mail and Internet downloads, and is capable of blocking hostile Java classes and ActiveX controls. Bob Burt gave VirusScan 4.0 the thumbs up in *PC Update*, March 1999.

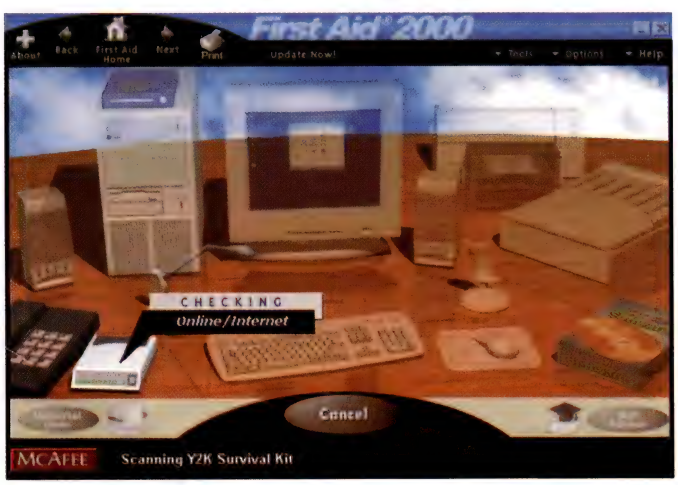


Figure 1. First Aid's main screen.

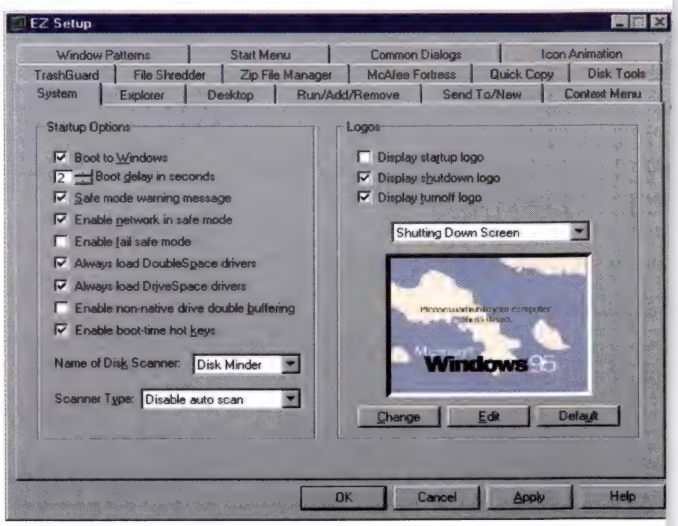


Figure 2. Configuring Nuts & Bolts

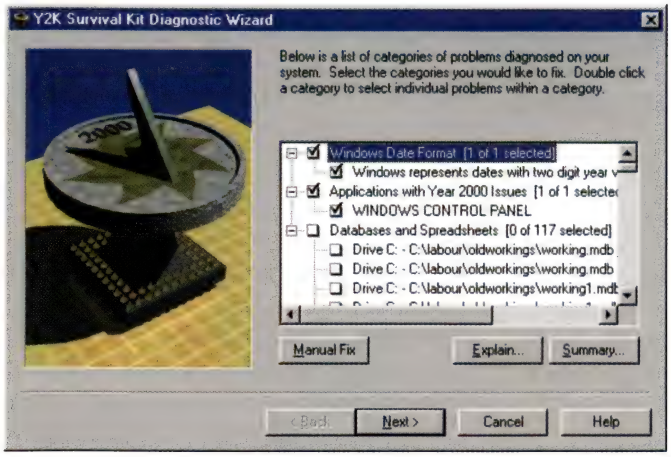


Figure 3. Results of a Y2K testing.

Figure 4. Uninstaller's main screen.

Y2K Survival Kit

I reviewed Y2K Survival Kit (Y2KSK) in February 1999 as 2000 Toolbox, a collection of diagnostic and repair tools for the Year 2000 problem (Figure 3). Y2KSK checks your PC's hardware and software and claims to be able to fix Y2K data problems. There have been a few changes since my original review. Y2K Survival Kit checks a larger range of applications (6000, up from 150) and ensures that your Windows short date format displays with a 4-digit year. Y2KSK now integrates with Oil Change, and automatically logs on to the Oil Change Web site to check for fixes for any non-compliant applications it finds on your PC. If fixes are available, it offers you the option of downloading and installing them.

Unfortunately, Y2KSK fared no better in my tests than did 2000 Toolbox. Most of the problems I identified then still exist. Y2KSK told me which applications it had checked, but not which it didn't. It failed to identify some common noncompliant software and to detect spreadsheets with date problems. This time around it appeared to identify all my problematic Access 2 and Access 7 databases but still couldn't fix any errors. It also incorrectly reported various problems as 'fixed', and couldn't locate a Windows 95 fix on the Oil Change site.

Y2KSK successfully identified non-compliant Y2K hardware in an old machine, but installed the fixer program in the wrong directory, requiring me to manually amend AUTOEXEC.BAT. Not a hassle for a computer geek like me, but it might be for a newbie.

Uninstaller 5.1

Uninstaller removes or archives old applications and cleans up the debris on your hard disk, such as orphaned, temporary or deleted files (Figure 4). It can also move applications to different drives or folders or even to another computer.

I found that Uninstaller doesn't work too well at uninstalling pre-Windows 95 applications, leaving a lot of files behind. However, it does a much better job of uninstalling some Windows 95 applications (e.g. Microsoft Publisher) than do the applications' own uninstall features!

Oil Change

Oil Change checks on the Internet for any updates to your currently installed software and offers you the option of downloading and installing any fixes it finds. Oil Change only checks for software which it knows about, but will undo any installation it has done.

Assessment

While McAfee has done a fair job of getting rid of most file redundancy, some still exists in that some programs include cut down versions of functions available in others. Nuts & Bolts System Checker, for instance, has a subset of the functionality of First Aid, and First Aid's Y2K Checker performs part of the same job as Y2KSK. There is no provision to choose not to install functions within utilities, and you'll still need a goodish chunk of disk space to install the whole suite.

McAfee Office includes almost every utility you'll ever need. There are diagnostic utilities, repair programs, backup utilities, performance enhancers and even a few purely fun utilities thrown in for good measure. Enough to keep software junkies busy for quite a while. It's not all gas and gaiters, however. Even though I installed McAfee Office on top of a clean Windows reinstallation, I experienced system hangs and other problems with a few utilities, principally those from Nuts & Bolts. To minimise conflicts, I suggest you install Office Central first, then one program at a time and test each thoroughly before installing the next.

McAfee Office is a great mix of utilities which will help improve the power and performance of your PC. While not all the utilities do a satisfactory job (notably, Y2K Survival Kit), the whole bundle represents excellent value for money; just go slowly during installation.

Cost and Availability

Suggested retail price $149. Available from Chandlers, David Jones, Dick Smith Electronics, Harvey Norman. Download trial versions of individual products from:
http://download.mcafee.com/eval/evaluate.asp.

Minimum System Requirements

486 processor (Pentium recommended), Windows 95, 16 MB RAM, 256-colour monitor, CD-ROM drive. Certain features require Internet connection. Free disk space requirements vary from 6 MB for Oil Change to 65 MB for First Aid; the whole suite requires 108 MB. ❑

PowerQuest DriveCopy 2

The homebrew gets an upgrade or three

by Jim Maunder

In the year since my last article was published, the old homebrew PC has suffered some home improvements. First, I should explain that it's not really a homebrew in the true sense of the word, in that I did not build it from scratch. On the other hand, the only parts remaining from the original "Dataland Bullit 386" bought new in 1992 are the mini-tower case and power supply. At the time it was a good midrange system with an AMD 386-DX40 CPU, 4 MB RAM, 120 MB hard disk (I agonised over whether to go for a huge 170 MB instead), 5.25-inch and 3.5-inch floppy drives, a SoundBlaster sound card and CD-ROM and a 14-inch SVGA monitor. After a couple of weeks I went back and had a 1200 bit/s internal fax/modem installed. To use it I ran MSDOS 5, the PowerMenu menu system and XtreePro. My main software was Kermit for the modem, WordPerfect 5.2 for writing, and AsEasyAs for a spreadsheet. I also had Windows 3.1, but did not use it much until I got Word 2 and Excel 2 a couple of months later.

I became a file leech, and soon discovered Terminate, which made BBS surfing much easier. Then the rot set in as I discovered the message areas, FIDOnet and Blue Wave offline mail reader. By the way, I was unemployed then, having suffered "compulsory redundancy" at the hands of a set of, umm, mediocre corporate managers at the council where I worked as a computer systems manager. So, between writing job applications and the occasional interview I had plenty of time to play computers.

First Upgrades

Of course it only took a few months before I needed some extra disk space, so I bought an enormous 210 MB hard drive at the PC show, and got Dataland to install it for me as a second drive. This was to be the last upgrade that I did not do myself. My job search led me to a group of like-minded folks attempting to start up a PC support business, and while this did not get very far, it gave me the courage to go it alone, and I went into business as James Maunder Computer Services. Advertising in the local papers, I got a bit of work fixing up home and small business computers. I encountered lots of intriguing problems, but that is another story or six.

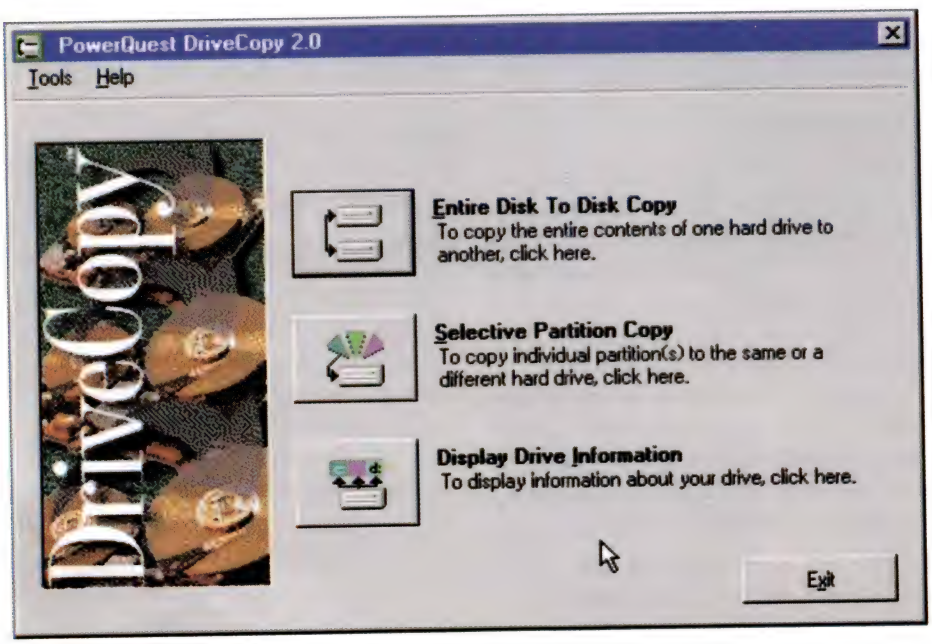


Figure 1. The PowerQuest DriveCopy2 opening menu.

One day I was at home doing some Microsoft Access work for a customer and got fed up with the slowness of my 386, so I went down to the wholesaler from which I bought parts and systems for customers, and lashed out on a new motherboard, a 486 DX2-66 CPU and an 8 MB RAM chip. Back home, I carefully checked the jumpers, labelled the speaker, turbo and other wires, and then removed the old motherboard and installed the new one. Now here is one for George: when I started it the first time it would only run in "slow" mode. If I laid it on the side (it's a mini tower case) it started in "high" mode. If I started it on its side and carefully lifted it back to the normal position, it switched to "slow" by itself. After much checking, tears and tearing of hair I found a work around, and the system worked fine until about a year ago. (See end of article for the answer). One of the nice things about doing work for other people was that I got to try a good range of parts and hardware, both new and traded-in, so my system had a few changes and additions over the next few years, like a network card, a 14.4 kbit/s modem, a couple of different video cards, a couple of changes of hard disk. At the time of its breakdown last year it had the 486 DX2/66 CPU, 28 MB RAM, a 410 MB hard C: drive, an 850 MB D: and E: drive, a Vibra 16 sound card, an old 2x CD-ROM and a Cirrus Logic CL5446 video card.

The Breakdown

One day last year the PC stopped working. It would power up but that's all. It would not even run the POST (power on self test). I tried swapping the CPU for my son's old 486DX4/100 without success. I tried putting my CPU in another motherboard, also without success. I fiddled with the BIOS chip. I did not pay much attention to jumper settings etc and if I had, perhaps one of the swaps might have worked. Anyway, the next Sunday saw me at Box Hill computer swap meet just looking around for something that might fix it

cheaply. Eventually I settled on a very modest solution ... the cheapest "all-in-one" motherboard, an IBM 6x86 MMX233 CPU, and a 32 MB DRAM chip, all for $280.

This time I had no trouble with installing the new bits. I checked the jumpers, enabled what I wanted on the motherboard (video, IDE, ports) and disabled what I didn't want (sound), labelled the wires again, noted what disk cables went where and so on. It started first time, Windows 95 detected the changes and installed the right software, and it all worked well, not great, but good enough for me. The old SVGA monitor packed up a few months ago, so I shouted myself a nice 15-inch Videocom monitor from my old wholesaler, Butek Industries.

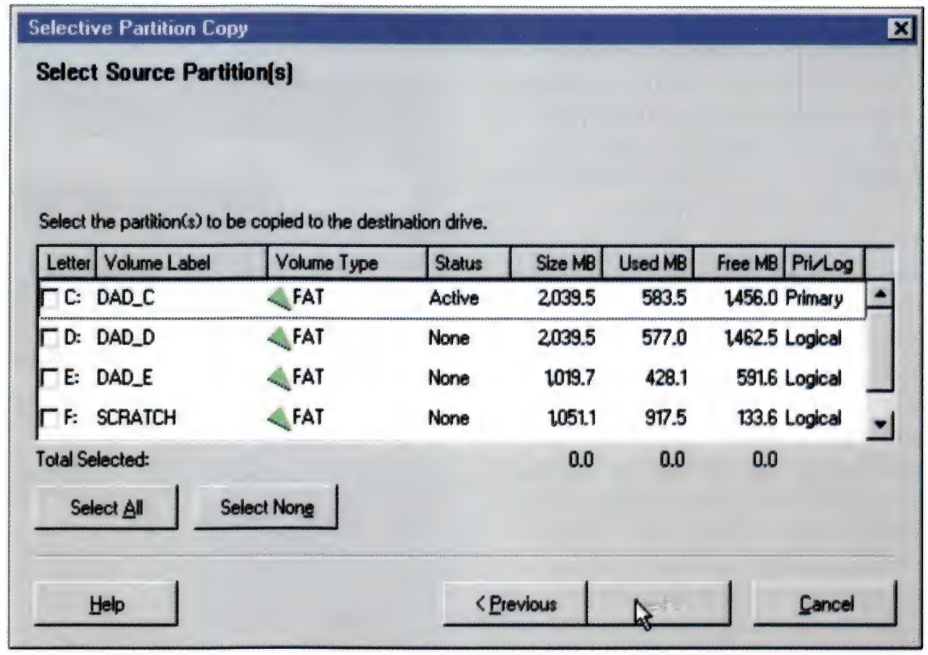


Figure 2. Select a source partition from this dialog screen.

More Recently

However, I have been juggling disk space for some time now, so a couple of months ago I started looking for more capacity. While looking, I picked up a 64 MB RAM chip for a good price one week, and a 6.4 MB disk a couple of weeks later. I also got a "lend" of an old Matrox Millennium II video card from one of my son's friends. The RAM and the video card went in with little trouble. (RAM is never easy to install, but this was no harder than usual) I had to read the flaming manual very carefully to set the jumpers to get all the RAM to work - I have a mixture of 72-pin SIMMs and 168-pin SDRAM chips. The video card needed the latest drivers, downloaded from Matrox's Web site, to work properly. The video card made a remarkable difference to the apparent speed of my PC. The "all-in-one" video uses ordinary system RAM and was not very snappy. The last bit of the upgrade, the hard disk, was a non-trivial process, and I will describe this in some detail as well as review a couple of bits of software that I used to do it.

Now I'm on holidays so it's "Time for the Big Upgrade."

Preliminaries

After thinking about how I would swap the disks, I decided to take the easy way and partition the new disk into three and just transfer the contents of the original two disks (three partitions) to the new one. A minor complication was that the 850 MB disk needed Disk Manager, because the old motherboard did not support disks over 512 MB. Another was that I do not have enough power cables for all the drives and CD-ROMs I have. I made a boot disk with the Disk Manager driver, FDISK, FORMAT, SCANDISK and a little editor (q.exe) on it, disconnected the CD-ROM, removed the old disks, fitted the new disk and set it as a secondary master. The two old disks were already the primary master and slave, and I had them sitting on top of the power supply separated by bits of cardboard. (We techies get a bit blasé about this sort of thing.)

Doing the Job (First Attempt)

I booted with the floppy, partitioned the new disk with FDISK and formatted the partitions. I then rebooted the normal way. Windows found the disk OK, so now I could start copying the stuff across. Not so simple. Windows has a mind of its own when it comes to drive letters. I thought I knew what was what, and set about copying from old to new. When the three partitions were copied I removed the old disks, connected the new one as primary master and rebooted. Woo hoo! It started and loaded Windows95, to my pleasant surprise. However, the drive letters of the second and third partitions were the wrong way around. I expected the old C: to be C:, the first partition of the new disk to be D:, the old D: and E: to become E: and F:, and the 2nd and 3rd partitions of the new disk to be G: and H:. Somehow it was different, and me, being a silly old bugler, found it too hard. Fortunately I had plenty of disk space available, so I just copied the contents around. (Make folders called OLD_D and OLD_E, copy the whole drive into the folders, delete the original, copy the right way from the folders.) Now I shut down and finished the swap by reconnecting the CD. When I restarted the drive letters where mixed up again. I booted to DOS, and when I used FDISK to look at the partition information the letters seemed OK and also when I used DIR to look at the contents. A mystery. About then I thought about using PowerQuest ImageCopy that I reviewed a couple of years ago to re-do the installation. While looking for it I came across PowerQuest DriveCopy 2, which had been sent to me to review. I never got around to doing the review [Ed: Better late than never! - AN]. I reconnected the old disk as before, and copied DriveCopy onto the old drive C:.

Running DriveCopy

DriveCopy 2 is a DOS program and although it looks like a Windows 95 program, it isn't. *(See Fig 1)* It will start in Windows 95 but it should not be actually used in Windows in case there

are files open. It does not need to be installed — just make a copy on the hard drive as I did or make a duplicate of the 3.5-inch distribution floppy. I booted with a floppy, and since the program is "mousable", I loaded a DOS mouse driver before running DriveCopy2. After a splash screen it shows a menu, and since I had wanted to copy two disks onto one, I picked the Selective Partition Copy option. From the next screen *(Fig 2)* I could select the source disk and then the source partition. (My screen captures were made after I had finished the whole job, so you will just have to imagine what would happen if there were 3 disks installed.) After clicking the "Next" button I could select the disk and partition where I wanted the copy to go from a similar screen. I also had the option of deleting or resizing existing target partitions *(Fig 3)*. The target could be an existing partition or unformatted "free space" on a fresh disk.

After selecting the target, the copy began, showing a progress bar. It took about 15-20 minutes to copy my approx 400 MB partitions. When each partition was done, I got the "Select Source" screen again, and started the next one.

I was concerned that DriveCopy 2 would do something funny with the disk that needed DiskManager, but it just seemed to create a fresh partition and then copy the contents without copying the DiskManager partition tables.

A reboot after rearranging the disks proved that everything worked well and almost perfectly. I quick look at the new

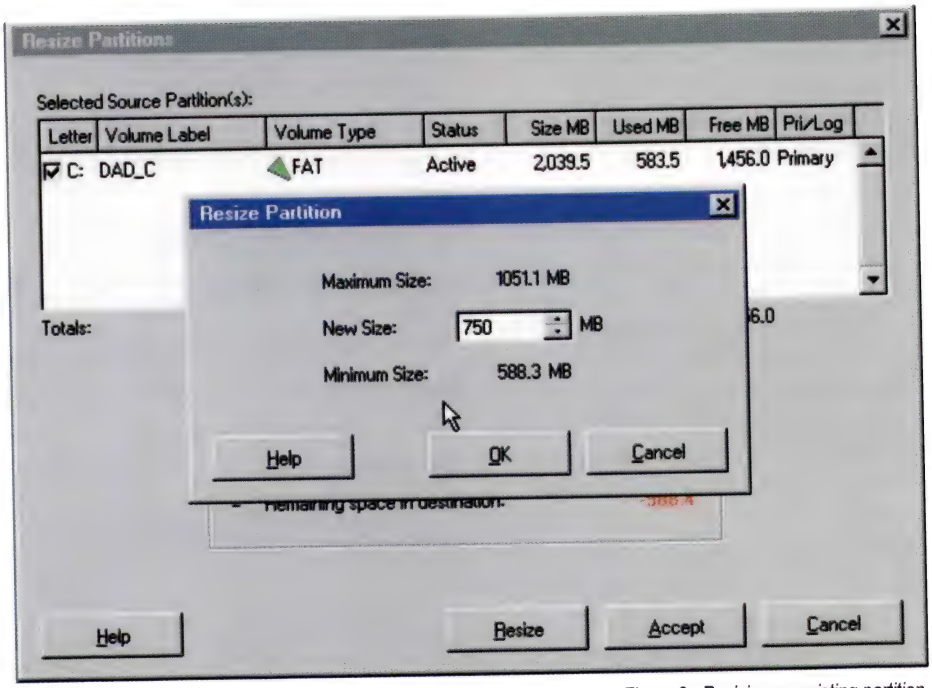


Figure 3. Resizing an existing partition.

disk with FDISK showed that the new disk now had two primary partitions (the original C: and the original D:) and a virtual drive in an extended partition. I guess that makes sense, since the original C: and D: were both primary partitions. I suppose I could have left it at that, but I was not happy with it. Time for a cuppa and a think. Hmm, I had Partition Magic somewhere, so it was time to look at that to see what it can do.

I had a bit of fun resizing partitions, resizing free space, moving and resizing partitions within the free space and copying the contents of drives to and fro until I got it right.

In the end the old homebrew has been transformed into a snappy, trouble-free and fairly modern PC with lots of spare disk space (for the next few months anyway). I could have done the disk swap without DriveCopy 2 and Partition Magic, but they certainly made the operation much easier.

Reviewed on a homebrew MMX233, with 96 MB RAM, 6.4 GB hard drive, Matrox Millennium II graphics card.

Answer:

It was the turbo switch connector.
I left it unconnected. ❑

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Teach Yourself Paint Shop Pro 5 in 24 Hours

For the Bookshelf
by Cheryl Alexander, Tampa PC Users Group

The product presentation for December 1998 was Julie Altstatt of JASC Software demonstrating Paint Shop Pro 5.0. When I mentioned to her that we already used this program, she gave me a book: Sams Teach Yourself Paint Shop Pro 5 in 24 Hours by T. Michael Clark.

I have been a long-time fan of Paint Shop Pro (PSP) ever since I was dragged kicking and screaming to it. (I was emotionally attached to a program that I knew well but had betrayed me by becoming obsolete.) I was aware that it could do many things but had no clue how to use the functions to make graphic magic. So, I poked, prodded, read the very decent manual and remained clueless. Then I got The Book.

The layout of this book is 24 lessons designed to take about an hour each. Thus, one learns a manageable amount of information each session if one chooses to follow the lesson plan. These lessons are outlined on the inside of the front cover and in more detail in the table of contents. This helped when looking for a specific lesson. The lessons are very clear and step-by-step. Explanations as to why something is done in a certain manner are included.

Mr. Clark covers the basic functions of PSP extensively and clearly. In fact, the first four lessons are for the rankest beginner. As I read through the material, I learned many things about functions that I thought that I understood and knew how to use. However, he goes beyond the basics and explains how to use these fairly easy functions in various combinations to produce some spectacular effects, such as glowing text a la X-Files, textured text, and metallic effects.

He takes one from the point of "Okay, I got this, now what?" to "So that's what it does!" by explaining the use and how-to of colour, layers, masks, channels, picture tubes and filters. He then demonstrates how to use these functions to retouch photos, correct colour problems and combine pictures for phenomenal results.

The last four lessons help in the preparation of graphics for the Web: how to use JPG's compression facility to best advantage, how to make those animated GIFs and pagesets (coordinating backgrounds, buttons, horizontal/vertical rules). Also included are resources on the Web where picture tubes, tutorials and plug-ins for PSP can be found.

I have been using this book to create title graphics, backgrounds, and pagesets for my web site. Also, anything I can learn about color and its adjustments is a bonus since my site is photo-oriented.

Sams Publishing (http://www.samspublishing.com) has been producing technical books for over 50 years and computer oriented books for almost 20. You can order books or learn online.

The author, T. Michael Clark, has been an artist all his life. He runs GrafX Design (http://grafx-design.com), a Web site that features online tutorials for several graphic programs.

Reprinted with permission from Bits of Blue Online, the newsletter of the Tampa PC Users Group. ❑

It Might Not be Broken!

by Paula Sanders, Tulsa Computer Society
http://www.ephemeralvisions.com

The following is just a piece of information that I thought I would pass on to other computer users. This is not the first time that this type of situation has happened to me. Since I have experienced similar problems before, I knew that there had to be a reason that I couldn't access a program that I knew had installed on my machine.

I like to create PDF (Portable Document Format) files. I was trying to create one from Word 2000, and I got an error message stating that Acrobat Distiller was not on my system. It stated that I needed to use PDFWriter instead. Both PDFWriter and PDFMaker can be found as various Macros and in various forms and, of course, in various folders. Prior to installing Microsoft Office 2000, I had taken off Adobe Acrobat Distiller 3.02 and other 3+ versions and put on Adobe Acrobat 4.00. Word in Office 2000 did not recognise this later version. I had to reinstall Acrobat 3.01 if I wanted to create PDF files using Acrobat Distiller.

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Training Schedule — December January and February

Ian Rankin
Training Coordinator

Quicken for Small Business $240.00

Viv Martin

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Monday
7, 14, 21, 28 February

Bookkeeping, record keeping, producing reports for accountants using Quicken or Quicken for Business.

Prerequisites: Basic Windows experience assumed. Ideally, ownership of the latest Australianised version of Quicken for Windows.

Introduction to PowerPoint $87.00

Caroline Houston

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Thursday
3 February

This course gives an introduction to the capability of the tools, using the templates and wizards, creating graphics and creating standard slides. Students will create presentations that can be given as on-screen shows or printed for use on an overhead projector. This course is a must in preparation for your next meeting/ conference delivery.

Prerequisites: Familiarity with Windows 95 including mouse and keyboard skills.

MS Word - Enhancing Documents $81.00

Jane Moreland

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Tuesday
8 February

On the completion of this course students will be able to create and modify the appearance of a table, enter data into a table, create columns and frames, import graphics, create captions and embed drawings, and use Word Art effectively.

Prerequisites: Familiarity with the Windows environment including mouse and keyboard skills. Students should be able to cut, copy and paste text and should have a basic knowledge of Word for Windows.

Access Introduction $207.00

Peter Fallon

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Wednesday
9, 16, 23 February

At the completion of this course, participants will be able to:
Understand the process of database design as it applies to Access
Use Microsoft Access to create or change database table structures
Enter, update, and delete data in Access tables
Build simple reports using the built in Wizards and the Report Builder
Build simple custom data entry forms
Understand the terminology used in Access, and where to find further information about any topic using the Help the files and other sources.
A hands-on approach is used in this course. Exercises are designed to impart relevant skills and knowledge by having the participants work through real-life examples and scenarios.

Prerequisites: Prior knowledge of Databases or Access is not required although some previous exposure to databases is an advantage. Importantly, a demonstrated knowledge and understanding of Microsoft Windows 95 is required. Basic Windows features (use of menus, use of mouse) will not be covered.

Using MS Word to Create a Newsletter $83.00 (Perhaps one for Christmas?)

NEW

Jane Moreland

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Tuesday
7 December

An introduction to using columns to create a newsletter and adding special effects such as page borders and graphics (including watermarks); using the drawing toolbar to create your own artwork; using WordArt to enhance areas of special interest. You don't have to be an artist to achieve fantastic results! This course is a must before you send out your Christmas cards and letters.

Prerequisites: A sound knowledge of creating and editing documents. A knowledge of formatting with borders and shading would be an advantage.

Introduction to the Internet $60.00

Lynn Pollock

9.00 am – 12 noon Saturday
4 December
9.00 am – 12 noon Saturday
29 January

An overview of the Melb PC Internet service. Live explanations of all the major programs that make up the Internet. Full detailed discussion of the hardware and software items involved, including modems. General questions concerning Internet connections.

Prerequisites: None.

Using the Internet with Windows 95/98

Lynn Pollock

9.00 am – 4.00 pm Saturday
19 February

Introduction to various Internet Hardware and Software issues arising when connecting your PC to the Internet. Students will install and configure software for Internet use including E-mail, News Groups, and the Web. They will receive Training on the various skills necessary for its operation. Students will have Live Internet connections at their individual PCs for practising their skills.

Materials: This course can be very wide ranging and as Browsers and other Internet software are changing constantly there are no formal course notes. Students should bring their own pens and paper for taking notes where necessary. Sometimes a couple of diskettes may be handy if Students want a copy of any software.

Internet — Effectively using Web Browsers $80.00

Lynn Pollock

1.00 pm – 5.00 pm Saturday
4 December
1.00 pm – 5.00 pm Saturday
29 January

Complete examination and discussion of all the features in the latest versions of both Netscape and MS Internet Explorer. Configuring, bookmark and favourite management, saving images and data, offline viewing o saved information, effective use of search engines and techniques, and tips and tricks. Students have live Internet connections to practice their searching techniques.

Prerequisites: Students should have attended the basi Internet course or have a goo understanding of Internet principles. This is an advance course.

Advanced Internet Part 2: Internet Workshop $120

Lynn Pollock

9.00 am – 4.00 pm Sunday 5 December
9.00 am – 4.00 pm Sunday 20 February

Complete discussion and live student Internet connections examining all the features that make up the Internet today, with the exception of Web browsers. Students will gain experience with the following: Advanced e-mail, FTP, Archie, Gopher, Finger, Telnet, IRC Network, Internet Phone, newsgroups and list servers, also connection problems and tips and tricks.

Prerequisites: Students should have attended the basic Internet course or have a good understanding of Internet principles. This is an advanced course.

Web Page Design $200.00

Steven Goldate

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Wednesday 12, 19 January
Thursday 27 January

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Tuesday 15, 22, 29 February

Students will learn how to write web pages for the World Wide Web. This includes HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) basics, use of HTML editors, both text and WYSIWYG. Students will gradually be introduced into the inner workings of HTML, learning how to write simple Web pages, then progress to more complex features such as using tables, frames, embedding sound files, incorporating public domain JAVA applets, how to create online slide shows and more. The course will cover such issues as features of good Web page design, FTP uploading issues and getting free stuff off the Net. Students will also learn about and will look at directory structures in HTML and file uploading with FTP.

Prerequisites: Preferably, students should be familiar with the Internet, using a Web Browser, have some basic word editing skills and be familiar with Windows.

How to Buy a Computer Free

Ian Rankin

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Thursday 2 December
10.00 am – 1.00pm Saturday 18 December
6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Thursday 13 January
10.00 am - 1.00 pm Saturday 26 February

What a computer does, what the jargon means, buying advice, tips and traps, no sales talk.

Prerequisites: None.

Hardware Upgrade & Repairs $120.00

Tom Coleman

10.00 am – 5.00 pm Sunday 12 December
10.00 am – 5.00 pm Saturday 22 January
6.30 pm - 9.30 pm Thursday 10, 17 February

Students will be able to dismantle and re-assemble a computer, replace major components. Be aware of the basic "Rules" and conventions of computer building. Know enough to get started on simple jobs.

Prerequisites: Familiarity with the basic functions of each of a computer's parts.

Introduction to Linux $140.00

NEW

Len Krois

9.00 am – 4.00 pm Saturday 11 December
9.00 am – 4.00 pm Saturday 8 January

On completion of the course, participants will have a general feel for the processes of Linux installation, some knowledge of administration and security and an appreciation for the look and feel of the basic Linux command line interface. With this knowledge of the basic navigation and file manipulation commands as well as the on-line manual pages, participants will be well placed to explore further in the open systems arena.

Prerequisites: The course is designed for Members who are seeking basic Linux skills. Although there are no specific prerequisites, members comfortable with command line computing would benefit more.

Materials: *"The revised edition Linux pocketbook"* from APC, including CDs containing Red Hat & Caldera OpenLinux implementations of Linux. Notes are provided on a diskette containing some good training resources obtained from the Internet. Students should bring their own pens and paper for additional notes.

Introduction to Windows 98 $267.00

Len Krois

9.00 am – 4.00 pm Saturday and Sunday 15, 16 January

This course introduces the Windows 98 environment to the computer novice. You will get to know your computer, how to use it productively and build the skills you will need to use Microsoft Windows effectively.
Students can expect to learn:

- *How to accomplish common tasks with applications*
- *Basic configuration and system maintenance*
- *Familiarity with the Windows 98 environment*

Topics

Overview: Hardware and software concepts, key terms window techniques.

Computer Filing System: Managing files, folders and systems.

Help: Starting and operating applications. Setting up the desktop, shortcuts and the start menu.

Personalizing: The desktop, start menu, colour schemes.

System: Maintenance of system health, system configuration

Materials

A comprehensive manual and diskettes with related exercises is included. Covered is a theoretical overview and comprehensive practical structured exercises.

Prerequisites: No prior computing experience necessary. However, you will have an advantage if you have had some exposure to computers and used a mouse.

Advanced Windows 95/98 $120.00

Lynn Pollock

9.00 am – 4.00 pm Sunday 30 January

Learning Outcomes

A full understanding of the Registry system and critical files. How to add and configure new hardware and resolve conflicts. Software installation and removal of software. Multiple User configurations. Advanced system maintenance and more.

Course Topics

Hardware configuration and installation; Windows 95 Upgrades and how to install them; Registry editing and selective backups of the registry; Software Installation/deletion and removal from the Registry; Communications Basics for Internet & BBS connection; Basic Windows 95 Networking for connecting 2 or more PCs; Advanced system configuration including multiple users; 101 Tips & Tricks to make your life easier with Windows 95; "Power Toys" and other Windows 95 Add-on programs; HyperTerminal and other accessories included with Windows 95.

Materials: A course manual is provided, but Students should bring their own pens and paper for additional notes. There will be many extra items discussed in class so note taking may be necessary. Sometimes a diskette may be handy if Students wish a copy of some software.

Prerequisites: Students *must* have at least three months use of Windows 95 and be very experienced with all its normal features as this course attempts to go beyond the general areas and explore the finer details of this Operating System.

Introduction to Programming $180

John Bourke

6.30 pm – 9.30 pm Monday
6, 13, 20 December

This course will introduce you to programming and teach you how to perform the basics of writing software. You will learn how to create and use VARIABLES and ARRAYS, how to control the flow of program logic, how to use LOOPS, how to use and manipulate files and how to write a text utility program.

Prerequisites: NONE.
An enquiring mind and a willingness to learn will be all you need. ❑

Dial Help Rules

The volunteers in this list (who are not necessarily "experts") provide phone assistance to members free of charge.

It is **not** free advertising for individuals who charge for their services. *Please advise the President directly of any such abuse.*

Please, before ringing a Dial Help volunteer: Ring the vendor's support line and/or your corporate help desk. Read the manuals and have them handy. Turn on your computer and have your software running if possible.

Be able to reproduce your problem.

Have your phone beside the computer. Keep all calls short, particularly business hours calls.

If the volunteer is not available do not expect someone else to solve your problem, ring again later.

For topics not covered here or if you are unsure whom to call, ring the Dial Help First Aid Line:

9696 9200 (10.00 am to 3.00 pm Monday to Friday).

A volunteer will assist you and suggest further contacts.

If you wish to help, or notice an error in the list, please advise the office by post, fax or e-mail. Please keep calls within the hours indicated, and avoid ringing on weekends.

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Home Visit Assist

This assistance is for those who may be restricted in their activities or mobility.

The contact for Home Visit Assist is Ian Felsenthal. Ian's phone number is (03) 9584 6391, or e-mail him at imf@melbpc.org.au. If you can help with this program, or if you would like someone to help you, please contact Ian.

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Ami Pro		
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Don Gingrich		9557 4545
Charles Sherlock		9481 0972
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AsEasyAs		
Andrew Oliver	9576 9518	9576 9518
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Random Access

John Swale

Questions and Answers

Q: In Microsoft Word, how can you get a list of short cut keys used and another listing of those key combinations that are still available?

A: Press Alt+F8 (or Tools, Macro, Macros) to get the Macros dialog. In the "Macros in:" list, select Word Commands and in the other listbox select ListCommands. Click Run and then select "Current menu and keyboard setup". Click OK.

Q: When using the Internet, I get messages that the Internet connection is very slow and if I click a button it will be speeded up. Should I try it?

A: Some programs start downloading all pages on the site in case you need them as this will speed up subsequent accesses. This process takes up bandwidth and degrades the performance for everyone else. It can also be costly when we are paying for data volume and therefore the practice is discouraged.

Q: I have a Creative 48X CD-ROM with a Creative sound card. I want to play CDs through the Creative Player into my HiFi. While the Creative dialog shows it is playing, it seems that the Windows player is being used. At other times the player that is with the multimedia keyboard does the playing. How can I deactivate the other two players and only use the Creative one?

A: Remove AutoInsert from the CD-ROM in System Manager. You can then set the player to default to the one you want.

Q: I have installed Windows 98 SE on five PCs. On three there is no problem but on two I cannot get them to shut down. I have removed Norton [sic] and disabled Power Management, which I have been told may cause the problem.

A1: This can be difficult to solve. If you go to the Microsoft knowledge base site *http://www.microsoft.com/support/* you will find ten pages of suggestions.

A2: Disable Fast Shutdown is one of those suggestions that often works.

A3: There is a patch on the Microsoft site. It happens with some new motherboards when you load the Sound Blaster driver.

Unanswered Question

Q: I have had to reinstall IE5 and Outlook Express. I saved my mail files first and then put them back. Now I can't get the program to recognise the old files. I tried File Import and selected the old files, but that did not work.

From the Windows SIG

Q: I placed one CD-ROM on top of another and scratched it. I know Microsoft will replace it for a fee but is there any other way to retrieve it?

A: Try copying it to the hard disk. You may get enough of it copied for an installation. There are kits for polishing CDs or try toothpaste and water with a very soft cloth.

Q: Will the QuickRes program to change resolution work on Windows 98?

A: Yes it should.

Q: I'm using Outlook Express 5 and saved my mail file, reformatted the hard disk and dragged the mail file back but OE won't recognise it.

A: Go into Options, Advanced tab, File Location, and point to the correct file.

Q: Under Windows 98, Netscape 4.61 was patched to 4.7 but it would not run

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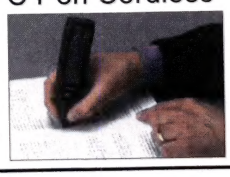

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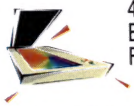

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giving an Invalid Page fault in fullsoft.dll. The file was moved and then it was all right.

A: In the Resource Kit there is a utility to identify which CAB file DLLs come from. You can then extract the one required.

Q: Can you boot from a CD-ROM? I want to try Linux.

A: Yes, if the BIOS supports it.

Q: I put a 6.4 GB disk as a second hard drive. While it worked initially, when I did an FDISK and Format it only worked in safe mode. In normal mode the system hangs. If I remove the disk the system works.

A: A second hard disk can cause problems and you need to try to get the right combination of settings. Each of IDE1 and IDE2 can have a master and a slave. The IDE1 master is C: but you will have to try the CD-ROM drive and hard disk as various combinations of master and slave. If the hard disks are from different manufacturers you may also need to change a jumper on the second disk.

Q: Can you use the Microsoft Windows 95 configuration backup in Windows 98?

A: Windows 98 itself makes five backup versions of the Registry, system.ini and win.ini.

Q: What can you do if you can't start Windows?

A: Open in DOS mode. Rename system.dat and user.dat files to .bak and rename system.da0 and user.da0 to .dat files. Then restart Windows.

Q: What can you do if the machine won't shut down?

A: Press Ctl+Alt+Del to see what is running and try to close it. ❑

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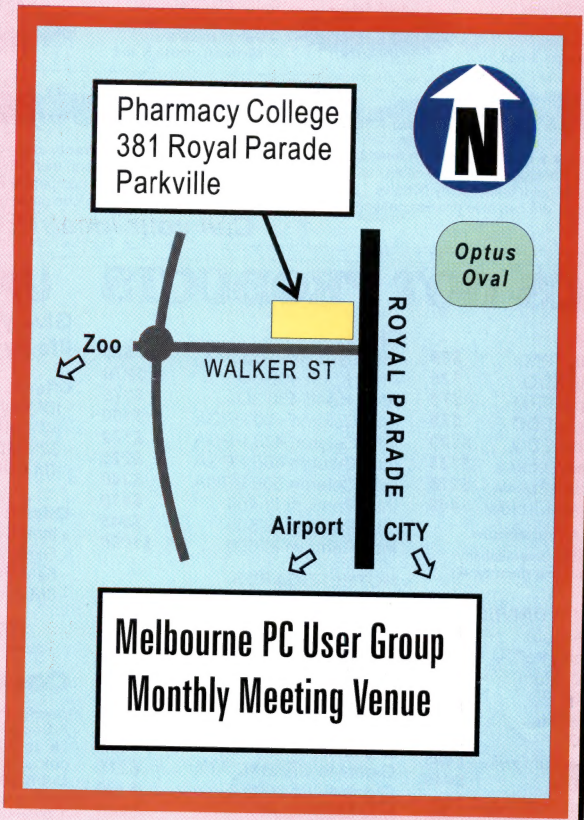
6:00 pm

First Wednesday each month

Do you have a product that would interest our members? An average of over 400 members and guests attend our monthly meetings, which provide an excellent forum to introduce and release new products to those who are both users and decision-makers.

Meetings are arranged around planned themes. Members or presenters who are able to assist or contribute are invited to contact the convener, **Brian Horman**, via the office, on 9699 6222 or e-mail *bhor@melbpc.org.au*



Next Meeting: 1 December

Annual General Meeting & Elections
Christmas Special
— Star Wars (Lucas Arts Titles)
— Children's Software from Dataworks

Acknowledgments

Melbourne PC User Group gratefully acknowledges the support provided by the following organisations:

American Power Conversion for the supply of six uninterruptible power supplies for the Group's Communications Centre.

Computer Rebuilds for the supply of equipment used in the Group's Communications Centre and in the production of *PC Update*.

Michaels Camera & Video for a Kodak DC20 Digital Camera.

Microsoft Australia for many years of contributions and support.

SONY Australia for the supply of equipment used in the production of *PC Update*.

Symantec Australia for many years of contributions and support.

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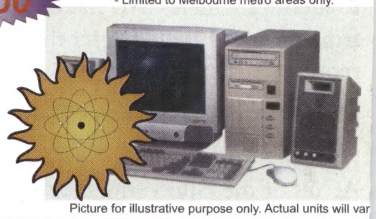

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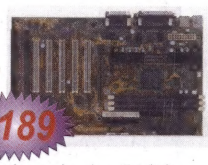

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